BULLETIN OF THE MADRAS GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

EDITED BY THE
DIRECTOR OF MUSEUMS, MADRAS.

ADIVASIS OF KODIAKKARAI

BY
A. V. N. SARMA,
Formerly Curator, Anthropology Section, Government Museum, Madras.

NEW SERIES - General Section—Vol. XIII—No. 1

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GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU
1976

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PREFACE.

The interest to study Adivasis of Point Calimere began in 1956, when a group of us encountered them during a zoological field trip. Then, after joining the staff of the museum in 1961, formal field work became possible, but at no time could I spend over 10 days in the field. Hence from 1961 to 1965, field work was planned in such a fashion, so that the whole calendrical activities could be observed. Then in 1972, during an ecological survey of East Coastal South India, an extended observation was done on the Adivasis. Therefore, this work spans over a decade of observations.

During the initial tenure of the field work, data collection was much more ethnographic in nature. Since 1969, most of my theoretical focus has centered around ecological adaptation.

In getting this material collected and released, I thank The Director of Museums of Tamil Nadu Government. Any shortcomings and other errors that are to be found, solely rest with me. In the field, almost all the Adivasis were helpful in giving me information on the issues I was investigating on. I also appreciate the help received through The Block Development Officer, Tirutturaipundi in field census collections. I also acknowledge the help received from the different village level workers at Kodikkarai. I would also be failing if I do not mention the help received from K. P. Jagannathan, Secretary of Gandhi Samarak Nidhi, Kodikkarai who was doing some uplifting work among the Adivasis. Finally this work would not have been completed without the help of my wife Mrs. A. V. Kameswari, to whom I owe a debt of thanks. I thank Mr. P. S. B. Kumar for reading through the manuscript and offering me several valuable suggestions. I also thank Kumari N. Vasantha, for typing this manuscript. All photographs are the courtesy of Government Museum, Madras-8. The pictures were originally taken by the author during 1961 through 1965, and are the files at the Government Museum, Madras-8, India.

CHAPTER I.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL SETTLING OF ADIVASIS OF THANJAVUR (KODIAKKARAI : PT. CALIMERE).

It is a widespread belief that Kodiakkarai and Vedaranyam were consecrated by the visit of Sri Rama, the hero of the epic "Ramayana". The evidence in support of these beliefs are the presence of a partly constructed bridge and the presence of two impressions in stone resembling the foot marks of Sri Rama at Vedaranyam. These stone feet from an important place of pilgrimage to South Indians. In addition the village Vedaranyam is named after the famous Rishi Veda Vyas.

At the South Eastern corner of the peninsula of India, jutting into the Bay of Bengal is the small peninsula which is known as Point Calimere in English and Kodiakkarai in Tamil. Thanjavur district is essentially composed of two clearly defined natural zones: one is the delta of the Cauvery river, and the other composed of Thanjavur, Mannargudi, Pattukottai taluks forming the uplands (map-1 of Thanjavur district). The sea along the Thanjavur district is essentially composed of sandy shelf with no rocks jutting out to give relief to the mainland on the sea coast.

A palecoecological survey by the author along the East Coast of South India during 1972, revealed that there are four coastal terraces. All these coastal terraces were eustatically derived. These terraces are approximately at 10 feet, 20 feet, 40—50 feet and 100 feet in heights (Sarma : N. D. and in Press). The Vedaranyam region is at 10 feet in altitude. All along the Thanjavur coastal regions, clear-cut terraces are lost due to cultural regions. In the areas where Cauvery River flows, intensive agricultural exploitation has lead to a gradual levelling of the region. This gives a rather monotonous dry appearance. Spreading from Point Calimere up to Adiramapattinam is a tract nearly 30 miles long and about 4–5 miles in width composed of salt marshes. These marshes were till recently unapproachable. These salt marshes are agriculturally unexploitable. Most of the industrial focus in recent times, has been in utilising the brine for table salt manufacture. This marsh is known as Vedaranyam salt swamp, where the migratory water fowl are seen during seasons. The Northern Point of Palks–Bay is called by Ptolemy as Kalligicum, which seems to refer to the Point Calimere.

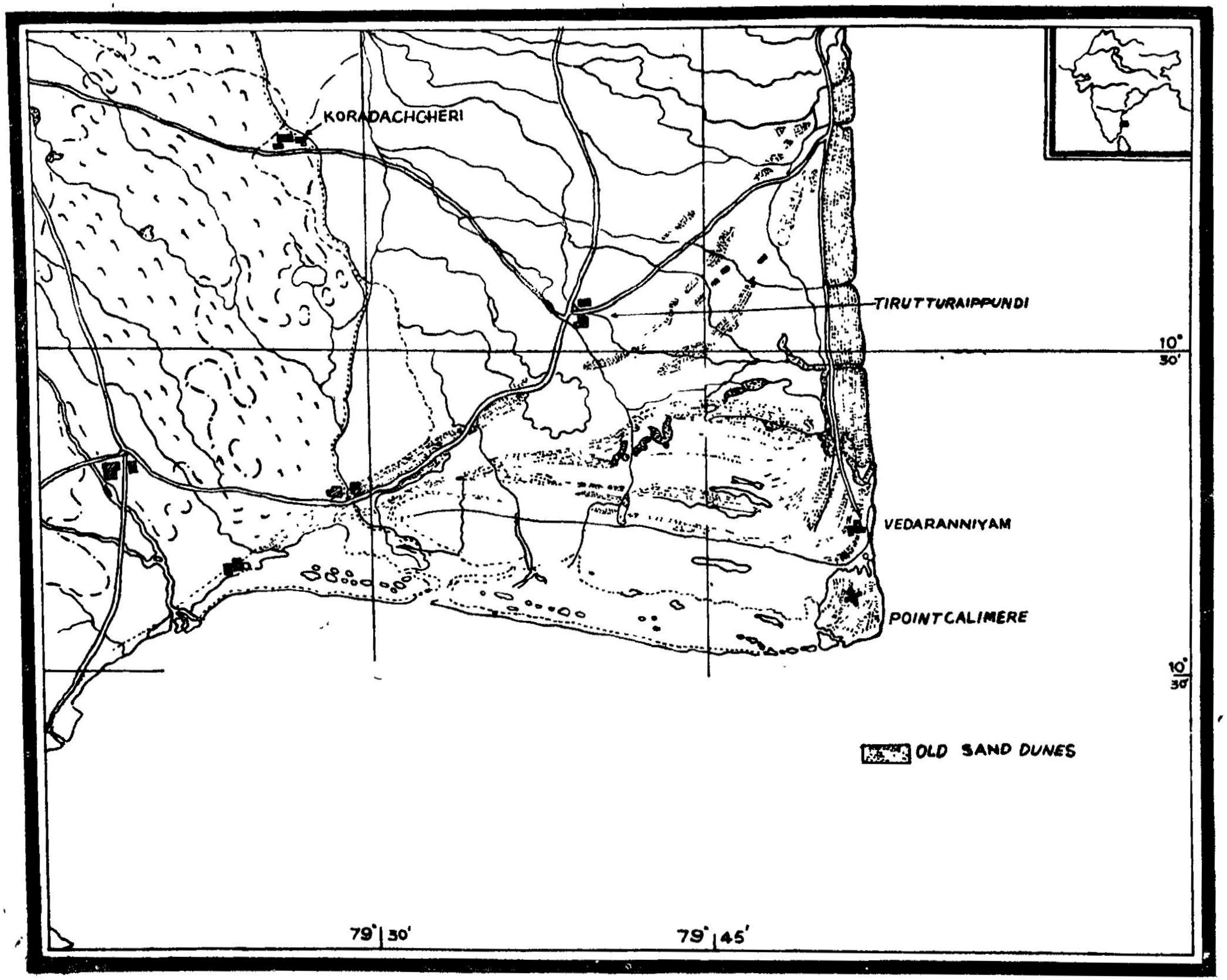
From the past records, it is gleaned that a port has been functioning at Point Calimere since a very long time, but the light house was installed only around 1902. Point Calimere never attained the focus of Korkai or Devi, pattinam in trade, as there was no indigeneous pearl industry here. The swamps were very isolated, and inundated due to Eustasy. There would not

have been a viable port around here. However, to warn the location of the point, the land mark of light house was established here for a long time. It is considered by people in and around this place that a bath at Point Calimere is considered particularly holy, when taken in new moon days of Tamil month *Tai* (December–January) and *Adi* (July–August). The neighbourhood of Point Calimere was rather barren and composed of only mud swamps till recently, in which black Buck, wild Pig and other small game survived. Most of the vegetation here was originally 'Halophytic' but progressive 'desiccatory' processes, land fills and cultural encroachment has gradually lead to the shrinkage of this original vegetation. The original nature of the vegetation and the impenetrability was the reason why the life and existence of Adivasis was not noticed. This probably was a major reason why our census parties have not enumerated this group and our ethnographers till recently did not make efforts to study them.

Legends say that at Point Calimere Lord Sri Rama first tried to build a bridge but failed. However our epics show that Sri Rama suceeded in building a bridge at Rameswaram with the help of Monkey God, Squirrel and others. From Pt. Calimere, Sri Lanka is hardly 20 miles away. Right adjacent to this Kodiakkarai (about 10 miles away) is a dense forest known as Kodiakkadu in Tamil. (English: End forest) and this forest extends further north and gradually merges into the more dense Vedaranyam forests. Ecologically, at Kodiakkarai is present the Halophytic vegetation, but as one proceeds north, one runs into the transition between Halophytic–Xerophytic scrub at Kodiakkadu; farther north, comes in the dry tropical Vedaranyam forest (Thanjavur working Plans). The latter are reserve forests owned by the Government and the former are private forests owned by the Kodiakkarai Municipal Panchayat. This point of ownership or control of forests is of some significance. In the Private forest the Adivasis are exploited by private contractors without any scruples, while in the Government forests, the use of forest resources are regulated by the Government.

The Vedaranyam forests are reputed to have been places of religious discourses in the past. Support for this, either factually or otherwise, depends at best on secondary and tertiary sources, which have all to be evaluated carefully. Most of the references to the rituals are documentary in nature, many of them having come from long oral traditions.

Vedaranyam lies north of Point Calimere. The name literally means the "Forest of Vedas" and the place is considered by modern Hindus as to be sacred. In spite of Rama's visit to this place, orthodox Hindus give second in Importance in sancity to this place, before Rameswaram. A bath here during the new moon days of the Tamil months of *Tai* and *Adi* (referred



Map 1. Kodikkarai Region. Place marked 'X' are the areas in which the Adivasis live. All stippled areas are old beach ridges, left behind due to the regression in the sea levels. Map modified after several sources like Air-Photos, Ground Water Project Observations and field observations by the author.

to above) are considered as holy. The adjoining village of *Agastyaampalli* is remarkable as possessing a temple of the sage *Agastya–Maharishi*, who is considered as the mystical leader of the brahmins on their immigrations to South India. There are several lineages derived from this source.

The aboriginal people who live in the Kodiakkarai forests are known as "Adivasis" at present. This name has been thrust on these people by the Gandhi Samarak Nidhi. We probably will never know the original name of these people. After all, the word "Tribal" is the gift of the English speaking world to the Anthropological literature. In the same light the word "Adivasis" is the *gift* of *Bharat* to our most ancient inhabitants and their successors. Hence for convenience, this monograph treats the population as "Adivasis". However, local enquiries from long term residents and the knowledgeable adivasis reveal the following. The name by which these people were known in earlier days, was "Cheendi Valayargals", named after an underground stem (tuber) known as "Cheendikazhangu" which these people consume. These people were also known as "Ambalakkarans" and "Adiambalams" also, by the local village people, who are mostly caste Hindus. The adivasis are at present in some sort of band stage of social organization. They have, now-a-days, taken to some amount of fishing also.

This group of adivasis were made up of about 151 individuals when this work was started in July 1961 at Kodiakkarai. (See table No. 8.) There was another small group, at Idumbavanam, which was composed of about 100 individuals belonging to the adivasis. It appears that during earlier times, there was a split and two groups of adivasis came to live at different areas. These groups were closely related to each other, as reflected by the following. There were inter-marriages between the Kodiakkarai and the Idumbavanam groups. There is frequent contact between these two groups as they were within 10 miles of each other. In addition, according to the Kodiakkarai people, there are no known geneological relatives of theirs existing any where else.

While the fact that these people may or may not have existed at the time of Lord Sri Rama's time remains to be proven or disproven, there is one significant point of interest i.e. due to the geographical location of aboriginal groups, these places of Kodiakkarai and Idumbavanam are not very far from Sri Lanka. During a low tide the distance between this Island Nation and Kodiakkarai coast is around 20 miles.

Studies in the last 2–3 decades has brought to light, that there have been extreme fluctuations in the sea-levels. The controversies that have existed thus far rest with three major hypothesis : (*a*) Sea level has fluctuated during glacial-interglacial times, but since Holocene has only gradually risen (Sheppards

1963); (*b*) Sea level has fluctuated as above but since the last 6,000 years, It has only shown a gradual rise (Jelgersma: 1967); and (*c*) The sea level has been oscillating right through the Geological time maintaining a high (interglacial) and low (glaical) levels (Fairbridge: 1961). While this controversy has not been exactly settled, several important conclusions have been resultant. These are (i) no single world sea level curve would explain all the world areas, as some areas are sinking (Isostasy), other are uplifting, and yet some others are undergoing tectonic faults; (ii) The consensus seems to point out that an oscillating Eustatic Model is more relevant than a gradual rise model, (iii) Regions once considered most stable are not that " Stable " after all; and lastly (iv) certain continents which are made up of crystalline base, are likely to yield much more meaningful eustatic data than coral islands and Atolls, form where major studies have come in early " 60 "s. In the light of these significant observations, Indian Peninsula is likely to be one of the most important regions to get eustatic information. In earlier field work done on this aspect, the data revealed that there were two eustatic regressions in the past (undated, but within late-Pleistocene and Holocene times, i.e., last 40,000 years), located at about 20′ and 10′ depths. These negative drops were noticed from borehole logs kept at Tuticorin Harbour and Nagappattinam Harbour. These drops would have exposed the " land bridge " at Rameswaram, and linked the continental shelves across Point Calimere areas. These drops in sea level are quite apart from the glacial-interglacial drops, as it is clear that Ceylonese Stone Age Industries, Typologically similar to Middle-Late Stone Ages of India have been already reported (Deraniyagala: B. Allchin). Therefore the gap between Sri Lanka and the Indian mainland, was much less than what it actually is now. It has some sort of historical (Sri Rama's conquering of Lanka) and mythological support. There are evidences to show that there are some rocks jutting into the sea at about 7 or 8 miles form Kodiakkarai and Kodiakkarai sea coast. This rock formation is considered by some people as the remains of an ancient Siva temple. This place was known as " Kotilingapuram " before being submerged into water. A finely shaped stone from this place has been shifted to a place nearer the town. This place can be approached during a low tide and the Lord at the temple could be worshipped. This old and dilapidated stone formations could probably be the remains of an old town or village which was existant during low levels of the sea. As such, this point and the Rameswaram region could have been the only points of pre-historic population movements from the Peninsula to Sri Lanka. This fact together with the contents of the preceding paragraph suggests some interesting geomorphic possiblities. The whole of Kodiakkarai and its environs, including Kodiakkadu are salt marshes now.

During an eustatic drop, the shift in the continental shelf would have drained the area of salt-rine, extending from the tropical forest farther south of Vedaranyam. The present day adaptation to the marsh ecology of Adivasis, may

have been different in the past. Their primary sources of food still are forest derived. Most recently they have taken to supplementary sources like fishery. Modern caste Hindus use Point Calimere as a hauling station for marine fish, but the Adivasis do not use this source, but resort to small fish wires, damming up small back water channels. This study has indicated, from informant statements that the Adivasis have been living at this spot for several generations. From their own accounts of their past, and their status in which they are living (particularly their observed material culture) points out that they are all still in a stage of socio-cultural organization (Service: 1960). The informant statements and the other observations all point out that they have not shifted to Kodiakkarai, from any place earlier. This could mean that their existence at this place must have to be reckoned as an event of not of a recent origin, but one of great antiquity. So far there is no known pre-historic archaeology from this area. These people, reflect an unique Marsh-Forest Ecology adaptation.

Facts in support of pre-historic migrations from India have to be studied on the Sri Lanka coasts, which are contiguous to Point Calimere and Rameswaram region. Suggestive ideas are the following. If perhaps the people of the Sri Lanka coasts show similar physical and cultural features (including study of Genetic traits) it might give some interesting facts for the problem of similarities of Indian and Sri Lanka aborigines of contiguous region, assuming that the populations are similar. The area in which the Adivasis are living was in the salt marsh till recently which is devoid of any particular vegetation. Recently the State Government moved them to a non-marshy area. The particular place that has been allotted to the Adivasis by the Government is however a stabilised flat sand dune area. In recent times, geologically speaking, the whole coast is being encroached by shifting sand dunes, and as such the area occupied by the Adivasis as well as the adjacent areas are becoming flat sand beds which are infertile. Further, the water available in these places is briny. Hence for general purposes, the place is devoid of normal vegetation, nor is it cultivable. Since vegetation cover is lacking, the magnitude of dune shifting is very great.

There are very few cultivated crops around Kodiakkarai, even though Thanjavur is known to be the granary of South India. The reasons for this are more geological than cultural. The climate however is ideally suited for the cultivation of tobacco plant which is considered as one of the richest cash crops in India. The land around the Adivasi habitations is utilised for the cultivation of tobacco. This land is owned by the Mirasdars (people who are small land-holders and belong to the Tamil Pillai community of Kodiakkarai). The Mirasdars use the cheap labour of the Adivasis for the purpose of collecting the dry withered leaves from the forest, which are utilised for manurial purposes. The Adivasi women are occasionally utilised for the transport of humus matter

from the forests. The rainfall at Kodiakkarai lasts for a very short period and falls during the months of October, November and December. At other months of the year the climate is dry. There are no records of temperature and rainfall kept for this place, but during the four field seasons of 1961 through 1964, evidences suggested that it is one of the dry and hot areas with little rainfall.

During the rainy seasons, the forests in and around the Adivasi habitations (Kodiakkadu and Vedaranyam) are rich in fruits and other vegetable products. During the above months the Adivasis go to the forests and get enough food materials for their daily subsistence. At other seasons their existence is extremely marginal. During these periods the weather is dry. The food materirials that are usually gathered are short of supply. The people then depend on their other resources viz., their ability to work and earn money. At the present, the Kodiakkadu forests are private reserve forests. The forests are let out on an annual contract to a private contractor, who in order to make a success of his contract, restricts the Adivasis from going into the forests everyday. He gives small slips of permit for 6 to 10 people, for 2 to 3 days in a week, which permits them to enter into the private forest to collect food and fuel materials. Further, from the point of view of the forest conservation, the Forest department severely punishes the Adivasis from going into the forest, because, when the people go into the forest, they always gather some firewood by breaking branches, falling the trees and the firewood thus got is collected and sold as fuel in the village for money. This accelerates de-forestation. They also occasionally collect dried and withered leaves in baskets and transport them to their habitations, for accumulation and subesquent sale as fertilizer. All these restrictions form one of the extreme forms of exploitation ; yet from genuine cultural point of view, is forcing culture change on ill-equipped and unwilling populations. The alternates involved here—*i.e.*, the need for forest conservation as opposed to one allowing the aboriginal people retain their way of life is quite a serious one. Given the trend noticed in developing countries where several of these aboriginal people are rapidly changing to different ways of life, accepting more " modern " approaches, we should mediate these changes rather slowly at Kodiakkarai ; rather than abruptly stopping the exploitation, the transitions should be slowly mediated.

One result of these rigid enforcement of deforestation rules is, the rise of illegal entry and theft of forest resources for which the Government machinery is ill-equipped to control. However, it is quite a complicated matter, and where tribals are concerned, a difinitive policy is due in Tamil Nadu. This policy is to be done by an ad-hoc committee made up of applied anthropologists. The present set up is on the face of it, is not only incorrect, but with no planning is bound to produce more and more complex problems.

PLATE NO. 1

Two Adivasi houses. The one on the right is for a single person. Note also a fish trap leaning against the house and compost heaps in front of houses.

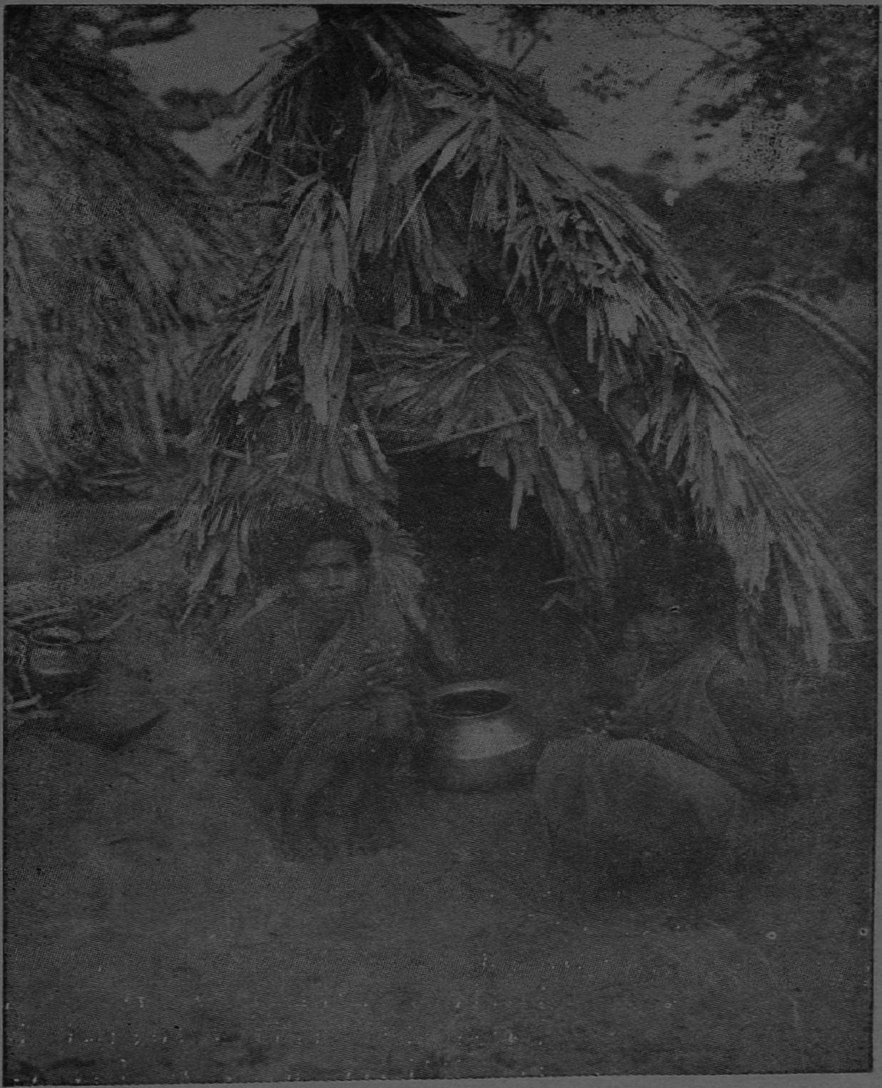
PLATE No. 2

Standard Sized Baskets for measuring compost during sale.

PLATE No. 3

An overview of the Adivasi houses. Note numerous heaps of compost or manure being collected for sale to local Villages.

PLATE No. 4



A small hut meant for a single woman.

TABLE : 1

EXTRACT TAKEN FROM THE CENSUS OF 1911. VILLAGE STATEMENT

TIRUTTURAIPPUNDI TALUK.

Serial Number.	Name of the Village.	Occupied Houses.	Population.			Religion.			
			Total.	Males.	Females.	Hindus.	Muslims.	Christians.	Others.
37	Kodiyekkadu ..	236	1,138	542	596	1,119	17	2	....
41	Korukkai ..	542	2,469	1,185	1,284	2,466	2	1	....

TABLE : 2

CENSUS OF 1931, VILLAGE STATEMENT

TIRUTTURAIPPUNDI TALUK—PREVAILING MOTHER-TONGUE BEING TAMIL.

Serial Number.	*Name of the Village.*	*Occupied Houses.*	*Population.*			*Religion.*						
						Hindus.				*Muslims*	*Christians.*	*Others.*
			Male.	*Female.*	*Total.*	*Brahmins.*	*Depressed Classes.*	*Others.*	*Total.*			
138	Kodiakkarai ..	223	434	658	1,092	..	152	851	1,003	89	..	..

TABLE : 1

ADIVASI CENSUS. 1961 FIELD WORK DATA.

Total Population.	Adivasi—Males.		Adivasi—Females.	
	Adults.	Children.	Adults.	Children.
151	40	24	47	24

Adivasis* : *Homestead : **The Adivasis live on a sand dune ridge. These ridges are about 2-3 miles from the coast. Much of the ridge area is covered with vegetation, especially *Spuinifex squarossus* (a crawler, which covers extensively), Palmyra (Borassus flabellifer) and other Xerophytic weeds. After their re-location from the swamp fringes, these people show an excellant ecological adoptation to the local set up. (Plate number 3.)**

The Adivasis build their houses with palmyra fronds (Borassus flabellifer) in the main. They supplement with other plant materials while building the roof and sides. The main beam is made up of long splits of the stem of the plamyra tree. One stem is split in the middle into two, thereby making way for two beams. These act as main girders. These girders are placed in the middle portion of the roof and these houses somewhat look like the inverted keel portion of a boat. The basic structure viz., the skeletal structure is built up of plamyra and bamboo splits. In the preparation of roof materials, the plamyra leaves are cut and spread on the floor for a few days to the extent of making them sun dry. Occasionally coconut leaves (*Cocos nucifera*) are also taken and split in the middle along main rachis. Later the secondary rachis are further split, and woven, making excellent roofing materials. Then the half leaves which have been woven are also sundried, and spread over the roof portions. In any hut, the leaves got from coconut trees constitute comparatively a small percentage to those of the palmyra leaves. Several houses are exclusively built with palmyra leaves, which reflects the availability of larger number of Palmyra leaves. Relatively speaking, a palmyra leaf covers only smaller area per leaf, as opposed to one from the coconut tree, but relative scarcity is the determining factor. Each palmyra leaf is inter-stitched with the other palmyra leaves in any roof with coconut fibre or thin strips made of the mid rachis of the coconut leaf, measuring $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{6}$th inch diameter. and about 18" in length. Once the main beams are laid out, and the main skeletal structure to the house established, the leaves of the palmyra tree are then spread over this skeletal framework. The usual sizes of Adivasi huts are not more than 12' in length and the basic average ground area occupied is no more than 8'x8'. The working height inside the houses never exceed 5' or so, often leading to cramped working conditions. (Plate number 1.)

All the able-bodied people with their families or otherwise construct their own houses, generally of full size for their families. But in the case of widows and old single women, who are sick and invalids the situation is different. The building of huts for these people is a co-operative affair and is dependant on kinsmen and siblings. In general, while this type of approach is the ideal one, during field work, several old people were not getting the right kind of help; there were complaints all around for assistance and help. Where old

people are concerned, benign neglect has become a central issue. There were atleast half-a-dozen persons, too old to take care of themselves,and were having difficulty in surviving a day-to-day existence.

Subsistence and related activities.—The Main source of food for the adivasis is by gathering. Their daily avocation centres round the gathering of food in the forests primarily. How their day begins is best reckoned with following them during a Typical Day. For convenience, the modern " time " is used in this description. Usually the day begins at day break, rather early, around 4 or 5 a. m., when they set out to the forests. They may consume a small, amount of food, known as " Pazhayadu " (Tamil: left-over or old food). It is composed of the previous evening's left over solid food, which is left in a pot, and if it is to be consumed rightaway, it is done with the further addition of water. They may spice it a bit with salt and piece of hot pepper (*Capsicum/ longum*) also. Then in the forest, they collect plants and plant products. They use a machete and a hooked stick, (called in Tamil: Parati, *see* material culture section for further details). The utilization of forest produce varies from, category to category. They follow under four main categories. (A) Fruits, (B) Greens (C) Nuts and (D) Others. Not all the plants mentioned here are available all year round. A large majority of the fruits they pick in the forest are eaten raw. Some others are boiled, salted and eaten. Invariably the leafy materials (greens), that are obtained from the forests are cooked and then only consumed. While the majority of the materials are sources of subsistence, some of them are of medicinal value. In the collections made during the field work, some have been identified. In the following pages, the local name is given first (in the language of the adivasis, which appears close to or similar as Tamil).

A. Fruits.—(1) The local name is Kalacha.—*Carissa caranda.*—This is the botanical name. The Adivasis are aware of the value of fleshy fruits. The fleshy portion of these fruits are eaten raw. However, in case of semi-ripe seeds and fruits, these are utilised in a different fashion, i.e., they prepare a kind of gruel. The semi-dry fruits are placed in a mortar and well pounded with a pestle. The fleshy portion is then separated from the internal seed. The fleshy portion is taken and eaten without any additional boiling.

(2) *Nagapazham.*—(Eugenia jambolina). This fruit is eaten as such. This fruit is available in the forests in plenty, and is eaten by the people whenever they see it, appetite permitting.

(3) *Thovarapazham.*—(Diasporia eupyropterus) This is a fleshy fruit. This is eaten raw. The inner pit is thrown away. This fruit is consumed while going around in the forests.

(4) *Palai Pazham.* (Mimosa Cassandra)—This fruit is edible and eaten raw. The seed is thrown away. It is found frequently in the forests.

(5) *Madukarai.* (Randia tomentosum)—The fruits of this plant are edible and eaten raw. The nuts are discarded.

(6) *Phoenix sylvestris.*—The local name is Iechamaram. The fruits of this plant are edible and eaten raw. The seeds are discarded.

(7) *Doorai.* (Zizyphis Denophilia).—The fruits are edible and taste a bit sour. They are eaten raw and the seeds are discarded.

(8) *Thoothuvalai.* (Botanically not identified).—The edible portions are the raw fruits and are eaten with salt for taste.

(9) *Kovai.* (Botanically not identified).—This is a fleshy green fruit and is eaten raw. When ripe it looks red and it is very tasty according to the people.

(10) *Verapulipazham.* (Botanically not identified).—This is a small shrub and the fruits are eaten raw.

(11) *Konjupazham.* (Botanically not identified).—The edible portion is the fleshy berry. The soft outer portions alone are consumed. The seeds are thrown off.

(12) *Sorattipazham.* (Solanum fexor).—This is a fruit eaten raw and the seeds are discarded.

B. Greens.—(1) *Mussutai-Keerai.* (Botanically not identified.)—These leaves are put with an equal amount of water, then boiled in a pot long enough and salt is added to taste. They may also add a bit of hot chilli, pepper (*Capsicum*) to taste. Then the water is decanted, and the salted leaves are eaten. The mode of eating is also typical. This is eaten from a leaf-plate or from the floor, but never from the pot itself.

(2) *Perandai.* (*Quiscus quadrangularis*).—The quadrangular stem is taken and is boiled in a pot. Then the pot with its contents is cooled. The contents of the pot are then squeezed homogenously with the hand, and all the hard parts are removed. Then the supernatent liquid is poured off. The remaining material is taken, added with the required amount of salt and peppers. The source for the species is the market at Kodiakkarai. It is then consumed.

(3) *Mima elai.*—Botanically not identified (*See* later) specifically. This plant is of great importance to the adivasis, and is of medicinal value. When they notice their breast-fed children vomiting the mother's milk due to some internal problems, they take the leaves of this plant and boil them in water, remove the leaves take the fluid only and then feed the infant a small quantity with a vessel. In a modern way, the use of a spoon or ladle is not unknown.

Occasionally the hand feeding is also reported. This is the only medication they know for their small children. Hence they value this plant very much. This plant belongs to the (Morinda spp) family. The location of the plant is very well remembered by the people. The plant is said to cure effectively, vomiting in children. The active pharmacological principle of this plant, should be an interesting problem to study.

(4) *Passiflora indica* (Locally no name).—The leaves are taken and eaten after boiling. No salt is added for taste in this case.

(5) *Minnikeerai* (Botanically not identified).—The leaves are taken and boiled in a pot, and the leaves are eaten with salt to taste.

C. Nuts—(1) *Koliarum Kottai* (Botanically not identified).—From the name itself it is possible to say that the useful product is the pit or seed proper. These seeds are collected, washed, and then roasted. Then the roasted seeds are taken and the outer skin is peeled off. Then the seeds are placed in a mortar and pestled well. The pulpy matter is taken into a pot and washed several times. This process of washing is done for at least seven times. Finally, the supernatent water of the last washing is poured away. Then the semi-solid substance, which is in the form of a thick paste is salted to taste, and is consumed.

(2) *Poonakachikkottai* (Tragia inrolucrata).—This is one of the key sources of food for the adivasis. The preparation of food from these seeds involve a very complicated and time-consuming process. The seeds are taken and washed, then boiled with water in a pot for some time. The whole substance is then filtered and the filtrate is reboiled again and then re-filtered. This long process is repeated six or seven times. Then the paste-like substance that results, is taken and eaten with salt and other spices to taste. This particular food forms the basis sustenance for these people. These seeds are kept in store for a long time, with no apparent deterioration. Due to the heavy run on these seeds, during certain periods of the year, acute shortages come of them. Generally when seeds are available in the forest, people gather them and store them for their future use. When needed they rinse them, and then prepare this major food. Further, even the youngest members of the group digest them with no problems. These seeds grow on large trees and have to be procured with some difficulty, besides individually.

D. Others —(1) *Molag urundai* (Botanically not identified).—This is an important source of food for the adivasis. This plant has medicinal properties, and is claimed to be an analgesic. The leaves of the plant are collected and put into a mortar, then pestled lightly. All the coarse materials, resultant of the pounding are distinctly recognised. All the coarse matter is removed by hand.

Then the remaining soft materials are further grinded and the pasty material is diluted to the required degree and then drunk, with or without food. This medication is continued for three days. The fever is invariably said to come down. The effects of cultural contact with more modern populations has resulted in the adivasis using this analgesic only in the case of failure to get any sort of Western medicines (from the local Government or the Panchayat dispensary).

(2) *Seenthikodi.*—Acacia pinnata. These long vines are obtained from forests, and after all the leaves are removed, are placed in a pot and then boiled. The supernatent fluid is poured out. The long thin vines are consumed with suitable amount of salt and sometimes hot peppers are added to taste.

(3) *Opuntia* (A Xerophytic plant).—The local name is Nagathali. The small fruit of opuntia is eaten when found in a ripe condition. Unripe fruits are not eaten. The plant is a phyloclade (Cladode).

(4) *Adandai* (Botanically not identified).—This is a vegetable, which is taken and sliced into pieces, and after washing, is dried and salted and eaten.

(5) *Momordica spp.*—The local name is Pagal. This is an underground stem. The shoot part of the plant is also eaten. They cut the stem portions into bits, and then boil it with water in a pot, added with spices (and condiments from the market if they can afford it), and after cooking will consume it. Sometimes they convert the whole cooked mass into a semi-solid, or even into a thick liquid, and consume it as a soup.

Impact of modern cultural practises on subsistence patterns.—Apart from the above forest food sources the Adivasis also purchase rice from the market at Kodiakkarai. Whenever they earn any money by doing manual labours or for working under a local landlord, they take the money thus earned to the market to purchase some rice. The quantity of rice that they buy is commensurate with the amount they have at any one time, which is under two rupees generally. The quality of rice they buy is usually the cheapest type, that is avilable in the market. In 1961 when enquiries were made with the local store-keeper, the price of rice of poor puality (viz., the cheapest avilable) which the adivasis have been purchasing, was rated at 10 annas per Madras measure. The utilisation of rice that is purchased is more or less conventional, viz., the rice is washed 3—4 times in water, and the supernatent fluid is poured away. Then the wet rice is put in a pot and filled with the required amount of water. Then the pot with its contents is boiled over a fire. The rice becomes soft after some heating, when it is eatable. Occassionally when the rice purchased is so small in quantity, and the water utilised for cooking is much more that the end product turns out to be a thick viscous solution, when it is known as rice gruel

and is drunk as a liquid. This is known as ' Conjee ' in adivasi language. If the preparation of the rice is conventional, then, it is eaten along with some salt and spices. Children, sick and the aged prefer the ' conjee ' as it is said to be easily digested than anything else.

The day to day work in the forest also involves in other money making avocations. Some of them are the following. They collect dry firewood stealthily and sell them in the adjacent village of Kodiakkarai. A head-load often brings in Re. 0·50 in cash. This firewood is also a source of free fuel for themselves. They collect dried leaves from the forest floor. There is no specific type of forest leaves involved here. These leaves constitute one of the best sources of manure for Tobacco plantations. These fertiliser leaves are sold to the local Mirasdars (land owners) for money. With this money, they buy some rice of poor quality as usual, and prepare food. They prefer this source of food to any other, as it is said to give them the required stamina.

Sometimes in the act of stealing of firewood from the reserved forests, they get caught and are taken to the Magistrate's court at Vedaranyam, where they are invariably found *guilty* and fine. The fine may range from Rs. 5 to 10 which is too large an amount for them. Unable to pay heavy huge fines at one time, these people prefer to go to the jail. The imprisonment may often last from one to three months. Even though these fines are heavy, they stealthily continue their firewood stealing. Since these people do not have proper (labourer) jobs, they find it very difficult to survive without processing firewood stealthily from the reserved forests, as it forms the only source of regular income for them.

The source of income from the fishing operations is only seasonal, and more often the catch obtained is so small that it is fully consumed in their own houses. Occasionally the selling of fish is also done, but very rarely is this monetarily successful, as the village of Kodiakkarai is along the sea-coast, and this area has several marine fishing communities. These communities are expert at marine fishing operations, so much so, large sea fishes suitable for table purposes are caught here, and since it is a " catch centre ", they as sold at very cheap prices. Bulk of the catch is exported. Since the best varieties of fish are got much cheaper than the cheapest the adivasis could offer alternately, they are all set in a serious handicap in this regard too. They collect *Pazhupa-vakkai* in the forest (a berry referred not specifically consumed by them) and these vegetables are also in great demand in the village for table purposes, often made into local curries. They often fetch sizeable return. The bulk of these berries grow in the municipal forests at Kodiakkarai. The privilege to exploit the private forests is annually sold in an auction for which a contractor bids a certain sum, and pays the same to the municipality or panchayat of the village. The contractor in return expects to make money form the forest produce. One of

the sources of revenue is the *Pazhupavakkai*. The contractor employees men who go into the forest, and procure these fruits. These are then sold in the local markets. The money realised is utilised by the contractor to augment his income. Since the collection of *pazhupavakkai* has been the traditional rite of the adivasis, the contractor permits 6 to 10 people every day into the forest to collect them. The contractor issues permits lasting at a time, for four days, for a batch of 6 to 10 people, and these permits are issued on a rotation basis to several small groups. This means on an average every man gets his chance of going into the forest to collect *pazhupavakkai* once in 10 days, and during that time he gets permission to collect these berries for four days at a stretch. At other times he is found unemployed. The stealthy plucking of these fruits from the forests without the knowledge of the contractor is not unknown. This always leads to the non-issuance of permits for long periods, severe beating and such other punishments. Due to all these restrictions, these people are found starving (?), almost every alternate day. The adivasi men and their womenfolk hold certain, to what may be called as a monopoly right during the marriage seasons. That is during the marriage seasons, the adivasi secure certain jobs as a matter of right, from among the local caste Hindus of the Kodiakkarai village. These jobs are like the washing and cleaning of large utensils, used in preparing the marriage feast. The cleaning of the vessels is done in the back-yard of the house, where the marriage is taking place. At any rate, these people are never allowed to enter into the marriage houses. The cleaning is done both in the morning as well as in the afternoon. Sometimes the vessels that are required for immediate cleaning are not attended to in the pandal but in the backyard itself. In return for this, these poeple may be paid a wage of Rs. 1·50 per day, plus free food, just sufficient for one person and his direct dependents, viz., his wife and children only. In any average wedding, two or three men are engaged. Sometimes the women also help in the cleaning operation. They may be paid less wages, dependent on the volume of work they may have to do. The food which is given to them has to be consumed outside the marriage place or in the pandal itself. These customs appear to be partly practised. The food given on these occasions is often taken to their habitations and consumed. The food is the usual South Indian type, with rice, sambar, rasam and other items. In the modern times, on occasions, some people consume the food at the place of the marriage pandal itself, but in the backyard. In contrast to these traditional rites of cleaning utensils used for marriages, some adivasi men have taken to festival cooking, but *not* in *Kodiakkarai*. On another occasion, an adivasi man was going to Nagapattinam in a train (his name was Murugayyan). He was going as an assistant-cook to a *large muslim festival* at *Nagore*, and to a marriage that were taking place at *Nagapattinam*. This man had learnt the culinary art so as to earn a livelihood from the same. It is incidental to note that this man's mother works as matron and cook to the Adivasi Sevasamajam School, maintained by the Gandhi Samarak Nidhi. The way this man was

dressed up, showed that he was no more a " tribal ", and was well acculturated. Some people have also taken to cattle grazing for local Mirasdars.

Cultivation, Crops, Husbandry and similar operations.—Any form of cultivation and crop raising is unknown to them. Normally these people are not associated with any cultivation operations of the local villagers. A few individuals, however, occasionally join in the operations of the local Mirasdars. The services of these people are utilised to the extent of bringing fertiliser leaves and humus material from the forests. The Adivasi women are more prominent in the transport of fertiliser than the men folk. Whether they are aware of agricultural techniques or not, the location of the adivasi settlements on an old sand dune precludes the cultivation of any sort. The soil is unfit for any such operations. They also profess a reluctance to do such work.

However, these people have been supplied with fishing nets by the Government. While they learnt the use of the nets, they have not learnt the process of mending these nets well. Only one Adivasi (namely the headman) has attained such versatility in these operations, that he is able to weave (new) fishing nets for sale or supply to local village folks. However, the remuneration got by him in these operations is very meagre. Usually the custom is that the thread for making nets is supplied by the persons wanting fishing nets. The processes of thread-making involves in rolling it round a spindle wheel (whorl). Then the twisted thread is removed and stored into long spools (made up of bamboo splits). Then with the aid of a needle and a small bamboo plate (of about 6″x 1½″) the net is woven. This technical competency naturally brings to the headman an extra wage, which amounts to Rs. 2 for each completed net (sold). This does not cover the cost of the thread used, as it is supplied by the purchaser. Each job keeps him engaged for a week at a time. The amount he receives is for his labour only. Due to the uneconomic returns for every single fishing net mended, the headman does not undertake the repair of these nets made by him or the ones that were supplied by the Government which are now in a damaged condition. He always prefers and undertakes only a fresh job each time. Each finished net that the headman makes, in turn, brings the village folk (caste Hindus) about Rs. 30, 40, when they sell it. Due to this high cost, the Adivasis are unable to buy nets directly from the local caste Hindus. In the case of the village headman, who is very old and unable to go to the forest to gather any fruits and nuts, this source of income helps him a lot in earning his livelihood. This is one of the reasons why he is engaged in these operations. He is conversant with the preparation of both the larger and the smaller sized net too.

These people keep small poultry and sheep for purposes of food and income. When they can afford they buy a small sheep or goat, and fatten it by grazing around their habitations. When these animals become big and fat enough

(especially the males), they sell it in the local market. This may fetch them an amount of Rs. 40. In the case of females they use it for dairy purposes. If it is a male, they sell it at the best period of growth. If it were a female they keep it till they grow older and become no more useful. During the course of keeping these dairy animals, should the owner become poor and unable to maintain them, he sells them either in the market at Kodiakkarai, or to his own folk (Adivasis). The price of sale at these instances, is a handicap to the seller as everyone tries to exploit the situation. Due to the urgent need, the seller disposes these animals to the highest bidder. Among the 35 Adivasi families living, only three families possess these domestic animals.

In the case of poultry, purchases are made in the local market, and the fowls raised. The produce (eggs) are sold in the market. The eggs fetch about 12 p. to 15 p. each, dependant rates at the market. They also consume the fowl when they need it. Just as in the case of sheep, the number of people having poultry is limited to 4 or 5 families. However, the general wish of all these people is to have as many of these animals as possible, but the poor socio-economic conditions seems to prevent this.

The largest flock of sheep and fowl amongst these people are with the Thalayari, the man who is responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the village and whose appointment is made by the Government. He is paid about Rs. 50 per month. This amount is for looking after the maintenance of law and order, in the Adivasi habitations. Amongst the Adivasis, those working for local caste Hindus are very few. There is one man (Kunju) who works for a local Mirasdar, grazing the latter's cattle. He gets a token wage only, which amounts to Rs. 10 a month. As regards other people, they lead their traditional livelihood, viz., one of food gathering and fishing with simple traps, and collect fertiliser. Some of these traditional occupations amongst these people are undergoing a change now-a-days, and have been pointed out elsewhere in this work.

CHAPTER II.

The Material culture of the Adivasis.

A typical house possesses all the articles required for day-to-day activities. The basic materials vary from the most primitive bamboo articles to some brassware and aluminium utensils purchased locally. Bamboo baskets and pottery articles generally show a predominance.

The hearth over which food is prepared is made up of 5 or 6 stone bricks arranged in a semicircular pattern. The bricks chosen are square or rectangular in shape. These stones are fixed firmly, and occasionally cowdung paste which is prepared locally, spread over the stones. The average diameter would be about 25 cms. and the height about 15 cms. The front portion through which the fuel (firewood) is placed and lit would be about 10 to 15 cms. in width. The fuel used is got freely from the adjacent Kodiakkadu forests. The name given for their hearth is *aduppu* which is much the same word as used in Tamil speaking countries.

While they work at the hearth they sit on a small stool made of a bamboo stem spliced into half pieces vertically. Only one half is utilised with the nodal ends acting as the feet of the stool. The height of the stool is about 10 to 15 cms. The average length of the stool is about 45 cms. There are some stools which are much shorter and smaller. The ultimate size of the stools under use in any house depends upon the size of the bamboo piece selected for its preparation. These stools are also used as head rests during night times. In their language it is known as *Manai*.

The process of cooking food is done by means of earthenware vessels. Almost all types of pottery occur. These vessels are not made indigenously. They are purchased from the local village. These pots are called *chatty panais* collectively. There are also large vessels with narrow neck and wide body holding about 15 litres of water at a time, essentially used for water storage. There are also shallow bowls, or plates used as lids, and vessels with broad mouth used for cooking of food like rice, vegetables, etc. One significant point about use of earthenware vessels is that, women folk are forbidden to touch them for 5 days after the onset of menstrual cycle. The adivasis call this menstruation period as " *theetee* " period. They also strictly observe and see that women do not touch the pottery vessels. This also indirectly leads to menstruating women being forbidden to cook food and light domestic fires in the house during their monthly periods.

The influence of modern technical advancements have shown some effect among these people. Occasionally one comes across an aluminium winnow

measuring about 5 to 6 cm. length and about 6 to 8 cm. width at the back portion and about 3 to 4 cm. at front portion, the edge wall measuring about 1 cm. in height. These winnows were utilised for clearing dehusked cereals from the chaff. Apart from this aluminium winnow, the conventional winnow is made of bamboo, measuring approximately about the same as the metal one. The bamboo winnow is done by the adivasis themselves. The winnow is known as *chimeli*. Every household has one or two of these chimeli for their use. The cost of the metal winnow is about 75 np. and bamboo ones about 25 p. or even less.

The pounding and dehusking of paddy is done by means of *ural*. The oddness of the rice huller is that, it is made of a wooden body. The pounding instrument is known as *Ami*. It is shaped somewhat like an hour-glass. The body at its middle region somewhat tapers a little. The two ends are flat. Apart from this it resembles a cylindrical piece of wood. In other words, a tree trunk is taken and cut in the form of a cylindrical shape, measuring about 25-30 cms. diameter and above 50 cms. in height. The Central region is narrowed down a little by scooping out the wood. At one of the flat ends a hemispherical depression is made, measuring about 10 cms. in diameter and in depth of about 16-18 cms. This depression is made at top surface. The bottom surface is flat and smooth. The pounding of paddy is done by means of another wooden pole, measuring about 80 cms. in length and about 6 cm. diameter uniformly. The handle end is smooth. The striking end is rough. The striking is done by holding both hands. Some cases the striking edge of the wooden pole, which is known as *Olakai* is provided with metal ring on the working end. This is probably useful in one or two ways, to prevent the free edge from fraying, and to give added strength to the blows at the time of dehusking. The *olakai* has another important purpose to play in the life of the people. These are of considerable importance during menstruation periods of women, which has been referred to elsewhere in this work.

The storing of small leaves, like betel leaves, and nuts is done by means of small bags made much like in the form of a purse, and provided with a lid. The purse measures about 10 cms. width and 6 cms. in height. They are known as *Vettalai pottis*. These betel leaves are mild narcotic stimulants. Not all the people are pawn chewers. Those who can afford to buy the betels use these bags. In addition, old people who have poor dentition use a small stone mortar and pestle, measuring about 5 cms. height and 3 cms. in diameter with a stone pestle of 1 cm. diameter for pounding the betels and nuts. They have no specific name for this. These two pieces are rare and seldom seen. Occasionally some small metal tins got from local village measuring about 10 cms. height and 5 cms. diameter are used as storage places for betels, and are known as *Tamboolam Dappis*. Betel leaves are purchased from the local village.

The use of a stone slab with a grinding stone for preparing of paste curries, for grinding other foods, are also common. These stone slabs are made of black soft stones. These are known as *Ami* (slab) and *Kirabi* (roller). The slab measures on the average about 50 cms. in length, and is about 5-6 cms. in the diameter in the middle, and slightly tapering towards the edges. The outer edges are smooth and rounded. These articles are usually used for grinding of pepper, chillies, coconuts and other spices at the time of preparation of meals. The practical applications for the slab and the roller are manifold.

Occasionally these people weave large mats from coconut leaves. They take one leaf and split into two by the main rachis. The separated portions are taken, and for each secondary rachis is split free of the laminae up to their roots. These secondary rachis are dent backwards and used as a skeleton framework over which the weaving is done. These mats are known to be 90 cms. in width and about 2 to 3 metres in length. These mats are known as *Talambai* and are generally used for sleeping and sometimes for sitting, at daytime. These are also known as *Olais.* These mats are woven when the leaf is green and fresh. After their use everyday for sleeping, they are left on the roofs of their huts or other high places. In cource of time, they loose their green colour (chlorophyll), looking dry and greyey brown.

Occasionally in some huts are seen small cradles made up of bamboo. They are slightly oblong baskets measuring about 60 to 80 cms. at their lengthier sides, and about 50 cms. across their broadest sides. The depth is about 25 cms. There are hung by means of cotton fibre or coconut fibre robes from the roofs of their houses, and anchored at 4 corners of the baskets, The average length of the rope directly depends on the height of the roof, since the houses are rather low roofed. It measures about 80 cms. or so, from the anchorage of the roof to that of the cradle. Occasionally the cradles are lined with old rags cotton pieces in a fashion to render the interior soft and comfortable. These cradles are known as *Balar Thotis.* Children are put in these cradles for rest and to sleep.

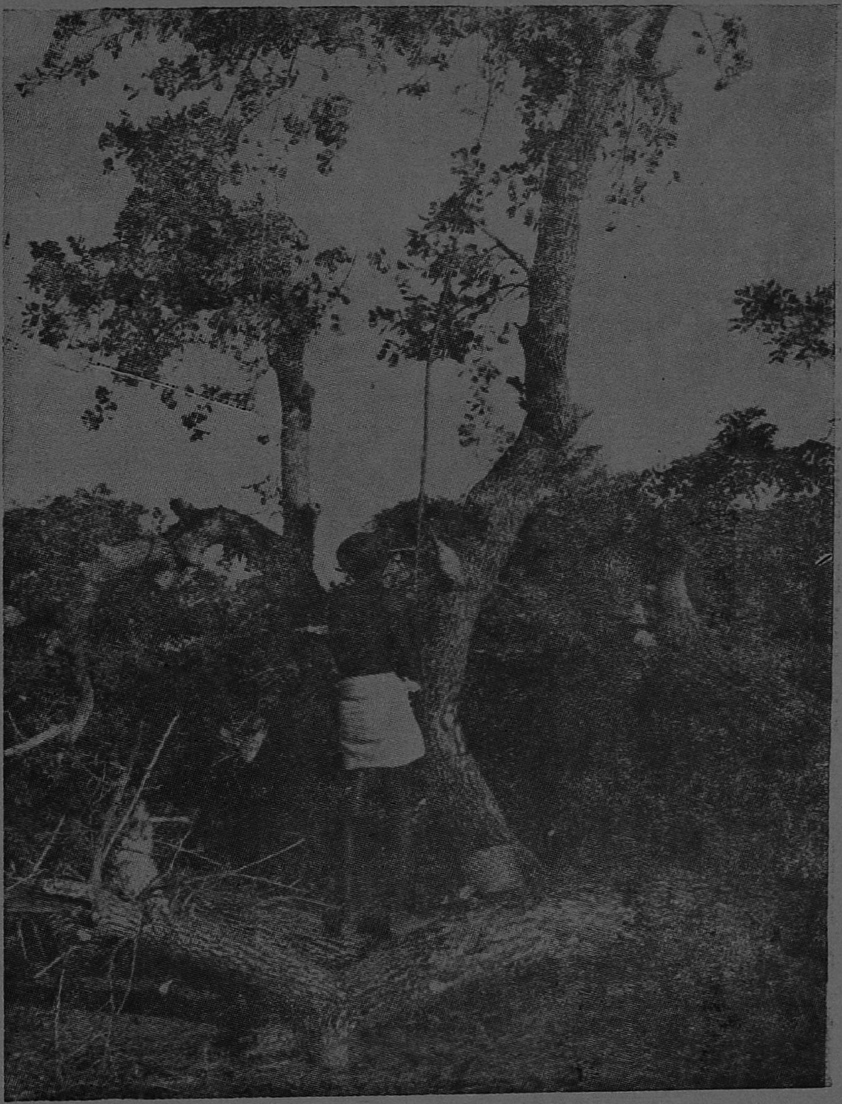
Apart from depending on their meagre diet from their forests, these people utilise the dark of the day for fishing. Their material culture includes Some fish traps and other contrivances like fish nets for fishing. There are two primary types of trapes (Plate No. 1.). These are known as *Peri* and *Kacha.* Apart from these, there are two types of nets used, which are known as *Varu valai* and *Kuli valai.*

The fish traps are built of bamboo splits and coconut leaf's secondary rachii (midribs of coconut leaves). The construction of Peri is as follows. Long thin bamboo splits are made in the beginning. These splits measures about 150-180 cms. Long and about 1 cm. in thickness. These strips are spread on the

floor and arranged in a parallel fashion, the length being constant, these splits are arranged parrallely at intervals of ½ to ¾ cm. each. Then all pieces are bound together by means of two or three long bamboo strips. Then the whole structure is like a mat measuring about 3 or 4 metres, which is then rolled into an ellipsoidal shape, the overlapping edges are sewn together with fibres (coconut) or sometimes with a piece of thread. The two pieces of elliptical end structures which are made, are arranged and stitched. The back side of the trap is blocked flat. The front side of the trap is slightly open. It is not one flat structure as at the back, but made into 2 or 3 portions. The outer edges of the front of the trap are left open in a way and the middle portion is blocked. The outer edges are provided with simple trap doors. These are made of coconut midribs. The midribs are arranged round a circular bamboo ring, in a fashion that the thick ends of the midribs are attached to the ring, and the slightly tapering edges are towards the inside. The appearance of this structure in profile looks like the roof of a conical hut. The principle involved is that, in a current of water, as the fish swim in it, this trap is placed. The fishes are forced through this trap valve, and since all the tapering ends of the valve open out, the fishes get caught into the trap with no way left to escape. In the case of a counter current or in the event of the fish trying to escape, the valve end do not permit it. This is a one way passage only. Occasionally valve trap is arranged in in the central portion of the front wall also. Consequently there would be three trap valves in the front end of one trap. In all the traps, at the back wall, there is a small door through which the trapped fishes are removed. During the months of November, December and January when there is an occasional rainfall and there are some areas which get water-logged soon after. These water-logged areas are near the sea, and tidal effects are strong here. During night times, when the low tide sets in as the water level falls in the stream, these traps are arranged in the direction of the flow of the current. The tilted front end is kept elevated about 19 cms. from the level of the back end, i.e. the trap is kept. When the water flows through the trap, the fishes also travel with the currents. The fishes get into the trap through the valve. When the traps are removed later, the fishes get caught inside. Then the fishes are removed through the small door at the back. These simple fishing operations are conducted by the adivasis during night times. During day time they go to the forests. These people set out to the streams and estuaries, with the coming of night, after their supper. They choose a suitable place and arrange the traps. Once they arrange the traps, they go to sleep under a nearby tree or on the sands. Early next morning they wake up and remove the traps, and carry the trapped fishes home. Again they go out into the forests during day-time. Thus both the modes of livelihood are carried on simultaneously.

The second type of a simple trap is known as *Kacha*. This is entirely made up of coconut midribs only. Long midribs measuring about 1 to 1½ metres

PLATE No. 5



Adivasis man using a Porati.

are taken, and their thicker ends are arranged round circular ring, and the long midribs and taken in the back, in such a way that the tapering ends all join at the back at a common point. This more or less resembles the shape of a funel, less the bottom tube. This is arranged in shallow pools or over an artificial bund, and the water in the pool is shovelled into the trap with the aid of flat *chatties or plates.* The fishes in the shallow pool travel in the shovels and get trapped in the cage. The fishes are later removed. This mode of fish trapping is a very skilful operation and is a very critical one. Every person using this trap must attain sufficient skill and dexterity in shovelling up the water into the trap for a successful catch. The shallow ponds and lakes used for these operations have to be chosen in advance. Thereby the people know the fishes inside it are there, and the volume of the catch could be guessed to a degree. The whole process is manual in nature. This operation of the selection of the pond is carried out during day time. While *Peri* is semi-automatic, *Kacha* depends on manual labour. While *Peri* can be left overnight without any attention, *Kacha* needs the full co-operation of a person or two. *Peri* is more popular than *Kacha.*

The Government of Tamil Nadu (Madras) have distributed some simple nets for these people which they use for fishing in back waters, shallow ponds and lakes. These nets have become literally useless, as constant wear has left them torn up. Adivasis do not know to mend them. It is also to be mentioned that Adivasis do not know swimming. Hence whatever fishing operations they undertake, they do by wading only, in shallow areas and thus they have not exploited the marine resources. The two types of nets are known as *Varu valai,* and *Kuli valai.* Varu valai has mesh which measures ½cm. x 1½ cm. and hence suitable for somewhat larger fish. These nets are provided with wooden floats on their top edges. Two men hold each one end of the net in hand, walk from the middle or some suitable place in a pond, towards the shore slowly in a gradual and graceful way. The people at either end slowly converge to a common point in the form of a smooth arc. As they come to the shore, they close each towards the other, so that all the fish caught up in the net are driven to a central area of the net, when the whole net is removed ashore and the fishes are removed. These nets are made up of a (jute) fibre. They have been supplied by the Government. Except for Peraman (the headman), no one else knows the mending or repairing these nets completely. However people are quite efficient at handling these nets, while they are alright. The people often expressed a feeling that if the Government were to supply them with a few more nets, their economic problems would be overcome. However they do not realise that fishing is not an year round operation. They often carry their catch in large coconut leaf baskets which they call as *Duku.* These are bags measuring at the bottom about 25 cms. and taper towards the top to

about 10 cms. The height of the bag or the depth into the bag would be about 35 cms. There is a fibre loop at the top to carry the bag. They hold all types of fishes in these baskets. Generally these people prefer nets to traps, in view of the large and sure catch that is obtained with the nets. The size of the fish obtained is also large. However the successful operation of a net requires the co-operation of two persons at least.

When anyone goes to the forest he takes with him a small stick got from forest for use as a picker. These are got from nodal portions of plants. When a long stem with a good node from which few strong branches exist is located, they cut it and make a pick. This is nothing more than a vertical pole with a cross piece attached to an angle at the top. It gives a hook like appearance at the top. The hook is attached to any object to be picked, and a force is applied with a jerk which removes, a flower or a fruit. They call it as *porate*. (Plate Number 5.) They also use a *porate* with two forks for collecting dried leaves in the forest, which are used as fertilisers. The dried leaves of the forest are swept and collected in heaps, near their settlements. These dried leaves are sold to local tobacco cultivators with the aid of basket measure, which is made of coconut leaves. The basket is called *Alabu petti* and it measures about 1 metre in diametre, and about 35—40 cms. height, the shape is cylindrical. (Plate No. 2.) These dried leaves are measured with this basket at the rate of 2 annas per measure, and the effort of a man would fetch about Rs. 3 or 4 per month. If all the members of a family pitch in their efforts, they will make about Rs. 6 to 8 a month.

The homestead adivasis is quite simple. It is a conical type of hut in general profile, but at the top there is a small ridge like structure in the middle. The height may depend upon timber used, but on an average, there is not even standing space inside the huts. The interior is less than 5′ height, at the ceiling level. The rafters used for the basic structure are derived from Palmyra trees. The stem is vertically cut into 2 or 4 pieces and these are used as the main beams. The walls surrounding the house are made up of mud and are raised to a height of about ½ metre. The basic ground plan is seen to be either a square or rectangle. The main rafters are anchored at several points around the wall. The secondary structures for roof skeleton are composed of bamboo splits, and these are arranged in a criss-cross pattern. Then finally comes the roof, which is made up of palmyra leaves. They buy 100 dry leaves at Rs. 20, and arrange them one over the other, all along the roof, attaching them by means of fibre threads. These roofing is ordinarily 3—5″ in thickness at any one place. The roofing lasts 2 to 3 years. The number of leaves required for a single house might depend on the size of the house, but on the average, about 2 to 3 hundred leaves are required. The construction of any house requires labour in addition. Normally it is the custom that while one man is rebuilding a house, his neighbours

and kinsmen help him in the construction work. The usual practise is to buy every year about 50 leaves or so, at Rs. 10 and go on repairing the leaky and or the deteriorating portions of the roof. This is primarily because, at one time getting a minimum of Rs. 60 or so for basic materials for rebuilding a house in full is a near impossibility for an average adivasi. In addition labour required for these periods, being an obligatory nature is not a continuously available commodity. However much the neighbours want to help, they have to work for themselves in this marginal economy. Occasionally, one is forced to build up a house if it affected by strong breeze or storm. The year 1956 was almost a neightmare for these people. There was a very severe tropical storm during this period, and it struck with its full fury in the Tanjore district. Nearly all the houses of the adivasis were wiped out. The people were shifted to buildings of a more permanent nature during the storm period. It was total devastation everywhere. The storm was followed by heavy floods. The re-construction of the damaged huts, is still remembered by all the people, since it took a long time for them to recover. The biggest house among these people belongs to the Thalayari.

Sometimes the people earmark a small corner in their compound for livestock if they possess any. As has been pointed elsewhere, the area occupied by the whole of the adivasi settlement belongs to the Government. Though this area has been given freely to them at present, a proper patta (a legal document giving them ownership) is still pending. This is of no significance, as the people are not affected much by the absence of this document for all general purposes.

Economic Conditions.—The economic conditions of these people is extremely marginal. Their only possessions are household articles, which they have acquired over a period of time. Their daily livelihood depends on the forest and its wealth. Their earning on an average amounts to Rs.10 per month, per adult in any family. Almost half of this money is acquired by means of getting dried forest leaves used for manurial purposes. The balance is obtained by doing manual labour. It is quite common amongst these people to have only one meal a day.

The clothing worn by these people is made of cotton now-a-days, and the dress consisting of a *Dhoti* and an upper garment for men. The *Dhoti* comprises of a rectangualr piece of cloth measuring about 2m x 1½m., and it is wrapped round the body. The upper garment is composed of a rectangualr piece of cloth which measures on an average 1m. x ¾m. and it is put over the shoulders. The small girls and boys wrap a piece of cloth over their bodies. The women wear 3½m. length sarees, just the same way as the village people. Upper garments are rare in women. Only one or two stray cases of upper garments were observed during the whole period of study. The Government of Tamil Nadu through its

Revenue and Welfare Departments, has been giving almost everyone a set of clothing (2 pieces each) for the adivasis. This has been a source of great benefit for these poor people. Apart from this benefit, the Government have allotted all the waste lands—(Poromboke) to them, in which these people have been living now. The adivasis have however been complaining that no proper " patta " (a document authentiating the ownership of the land) had been issued to them so far. In the light of their recent relocation from an area to another, scepticism here is part of their fear, and it is perhaps so they desire a degree of regularisation of their lands they occupy. Time and again the adivasis have expressd a sense of deep gratitude for the help rendered thus far, by the Government, particularly with regard to clothing and housing problems.

CHAPTER III

SOCIAL LIFE, CYCLE FROM CONCEPTION TO DEATH AND BELIEFS.

Conception.—Adivasis are aware as to what process leads to conception. sex acts are always done at the instigation of the male, and at night times. The act is done in the huts. There are no beliefs amongst the adults as to what causes conception. The whole attitude towards this, is that pregnancy is holy and pure. They believed that for the success of any family, the birth of children is important. Pregnancy is recognised quite early.

Birth.—Birth normally takes place in their own huts. The wife of Kunju-Vedamma acts as the midwife. She knows the elementary procedures adopted during child birth. She had learnt it from her mother who was traditionaly doing same thing before her. Besides this person, all the women folk know the physical aspects of confinement. No one other than Vedamma under-take work of this nature. This gives a sort of an occupational right to this particular lady. After the birth of the child, the mother and the child, live apart from the rest of the family members for about 16 days. The house may be partitioned with the aid of a coconut leaf, and occupy one half of such a partitioned hut. Old and aged women keep company of the mother with the child. The midwife may also keep company. On the 16th day the mother and the child are bathed. They may be given an oil bath. After the 16th day bath, it is followed up by baths on every third day, for about a month. The clothing used by the mother and the child are washed ordinarily upto the 16th day. Due to the influence of caste Hindus, the clothing is washed with soap near a well. Sometimes the clothing may be taken to the local washerman also. This is however done only if the parties can afford it. After the ceremonial oil bath newly washed clothing is worn, after which the mother and the child enter the full hut. The partition wall is removed in the hut. After the child birth procedures are over, the mother observes 14 days of separation from the house. Even though she lives in the hut itself, sexual contact is a taboo during this period. Also sexual contact is prohibited during pregnancy period, when once the physical signs of pregnancy become perceptible. The husband leads a normal life during the pregnancy of the wife. The infant is taken out of the house after the 16th day, but the periods of such outings are very short. Children spend most of the time in the cradles. The mother's chamber in the hut is provided with a cradle quite early after partituration. Breast-feeding begins immediately after birth of the baby.

Puberty.—The growth of children into adults is noticed, but it is done so with particular emphasis to girls than to boys. The day the girl starts

menstruating, they consider her a woman. They always say that their girl has become a woman. The literal meaning is that their girl has become a woman, not a girl anymore. The day the girl attains maturity, their parents starts looking out for a bridegroom. The commencement of menstruation set some social barriers for all women. Menstruating women are barred from entering the temple and its environs. This restriction lasts for four to five days, which sometimes extends by a few days dependent on the existence of a discharge. All menstruating women are earmarked to the corner in a hut. Between the menstruating women and the other inmates occupying the hut, is placed a wooden stick or a large pestle (used for pounding rice) as a boundary marker. This stick is placed between the two groups breadth wise, i.e., across and not along. It is usually placed a foot or two before the woman. This stick stands for the barrier. One must not cross the barrier during this period. Young children and infants stay with the mother. After the last day the woman take a bath and enter the house. The stick-barrier is then removed.

Social Life of the Individual.

Daily Routine.—As pointed out elsewhere the day begins with the earliest streak of light in the east. People get up and get ready to go into the forest for collection. They often return very late to their homesteads, after all their collections are over. After collecting sufficient materials in the forest, they head for Kodiakkarai village and offer them for sale. With the money obtained they buy rice and take it back to their habitations for eating. Before setting out for the forest next morning they eat the left overs of the previous night which they call as 'pazhayadu'. This is nothing more than fermented rice, and is particularly rich in yeast and such other substances. Whatever is available is shared between all the members of a family. Then they set out. The women generally accompany their husbands to the forest. Children also go with their parents but the grownup alone take part in the forest collection. In the forests they look out for different types of fruits and vegetables and on finding them they consume such of those as could be eaten on the spot itself. The other materials like nuts, seeds, etc., which require certain amount of preparation before consuming are brought back to their homes. They are later prepared according to the traditional methods and eaten. While in the forest, they exchange some small talk, which may range from anything like weather conditions, to the quantity of food collected relative to the efforts of the previous days, etc. It is also usual that at noon-hours they take a little rest. Whenever they find a suitable stream they take water directly with the aid of their hands. They keep on eating and drinking as long as they feel like doing so.

While they are gathering food, they also sweep out the withered dried leaves from the forest floor. These withered out dry leaves are swept with the aid of a two-pronged stick which is carried by the people into the forest or cut out from a suitable tree in the forest itself. These leaves are transported to the habitations of adivasis in large baskets. These leaves serve as organic humus for the Tobacco fields of the local Mirasdars. These leaves are collected and are piled up in front of the houses of each family with a separate heap for each family. Each heap belongs to a family and becomes its property. At the end, the collective efforts of a family is sold later. The return from each heap so collected goes to the head of a particular family. During 1961, the dried leaves were sold at the following rate in the market. There is a large basket used for measuring, which measures about $2\frac{1}{2}'$ in diameter, and one foot in height. It is cylindrical in shape. For each measure with such a basket, the party gets 2 annas (12 p.) worth of money. So, a large heap accumulated by the efforts of 3—4 persons in a single season gave a return of approximately 5 rupees or so. The total cubic volume of the (dried) leaves sold at a time depends on the atmospheric conditions prevailing at the sale time. On a wet and rainy day, after a little soaking in rain water, the volume goes down and the weight content increases. The sale is always by volume and not by weight. On a hot summer day the opposite situation prevails. So much so, a sale transaction on one of the wet days is of a great loss to the adivasis, while one on of the dry days it is a profitable one. The adivasis always hope for hot day to effect the transaction.

Being economically poor, these people look forward to getting some firewood from the forest. The dry firewood also helps them in cooking their food. This bulk of fire wood so got is sold in the local village. Dry fire wood is pur chased at the rate of 6–8 annas per head load (about 40–50 lbs.). A head load of firewood brings some return for a person, which enables him to buy rice and other essential commodities.

Collection of firewood, and food gathering are routine habits, which go on day after day all the year round. Collection of organic manure substance are seasonal activities. The collection of certain types of seeds and nuts is done with an eye on future (See Subsistance Section page 10). 'Except for the old and the infirm everyone else goes into the forest, seeking for a livelihood. When they are in the forests they take particular care against some plants, which they recognise as poisonous and harmful. Some plants in the forests have latex which is harmful for the eye, and if one is careless he loses his sight.

Sleep.—Generally in each hut there is only one married couple and their children. Sometimes aged parents may live with them. Depending on the

weather conditions, they sleep either inside or outside their huts. Usually they sleep outside their huts, on dried woven coconut leaves. These leaves are spread on the floor and people sleep on them. The leaf mat is prepared by themselves. Babies up to the age of 2 years sleep in the smalll cradles. Thereafter they sleep up to 4—5 years with the mother. The cradles are hung from the roof.

The number of hours a man may be able to sleep is seasonal, governed by seasonal conditions. When there is a rainfall and when the small streams are filled up, where fishing with traps is possible, the men leave after their night meal with their fish traps to suitable streams or other places ideal for trap fishing. There they lay their traps, adjust it to the most suitable condition, and then go to sleep. They may carry a suitable cloth to cover themselves. During these fishing trips they may also sleep close to each other to ward off severe cold. Early in the morning, they release the traps, and collect the fish. Then the normal daily activities are pursued, like going into the forest collecting food materials and so on.

Fire.—The fire required for cooking and lighting purposes is produced with the aid of modern kitchen matches. These people have no information as to how they traditionally made their fires. For lighting they use a small shallow dish and fill it with oil both of which are purchased locally, light it with a wick made of cotton or a piece of cloth. These lamps are kept inside the house in a corner. The coming in of modern hurricane lanterns, glass bottles with metal stoppers pierced with a hole in it through which a wick is put, are gaining more and more use now-a-days. Some people using these modern hurricane lamps do purchase kerosene oil for them. People of the Kodiakkarai village still use hurricane lanterns extensively, as these areas were not electrified in 1961. The use of fire for the preparation of a variety of foods is referred to elsewhere. There is a large fire place near the adivasi temple. This place is a sacred one. Food prepared during religious propitiations are prepared at this spot.

Bodily Function and Cleanliness.—One of the less known aspects to adivasis till recently, is a bath in a stream or water is an occasional event. Combing and oiling of hair are unknown factors. Hair was kept unclean and dirty and even today the same condition prevails. The influence of the local caste Hindus of the Kodiakkarai village seems to have had some effects. One occasionally sees a man with a nicely trimmed hair, a good dress which is most typical to rural areas. Trimming of nails is quite unknown to them. The whole body of the person is conditioned to a hard life in the forest. From the scanty type of clothing worn at the moment, it seems to be the case, that at earlier times a sort of nudity seems possible. Even now the women do not attach

any importance to their upper garments when they are in their habitation with their own people, including men. The moment an outsider steps into the picture they cover themselves and stop all signs of activity, like talking. The men do not generally wear any upper garments. The children are with no garments up to 4—5 years. The discarded old clothing of rural folk and other officials appear to become prominent now-a-days. The attachment to a pair of khaki shorts by some people seems to be zealously adhered to by several others. Discarded pair of shoes (open sandals) are worn by one or two persons.

The appearance of strangers amongst these people gives rise to a very different type of reaction. All people treat the stranger with a very suspicious eye. Several people watch the stranger from unobstrusive places. The fear of the people appears to be this ; they consider any stranger to be either a forest department or police department official. They are always afraid that the stranger has come to arrest them and put them in a jail, for offences committed. No talk or action is done while the strangers are up and about, the adivasi houses. The moment a new person comes in, a strange silence drops its mantle on the whole activity of the village. When once the identity of the stranger and his bonafides is established, this feeling goes out. In the first field trip also, their reaction was much like the one indicated above. In the subsequent ones however, the situation resulted in quite a lot of informality, as between the trips much more confidence was established with the adivasis. The Gandhi Samark Nidhi established a modern school amongst the adivasis, but their efforts are nil. All the children still join their elder brothers and sisters and move as a group helping their parents in the forest.

MARRIAGE.

As defined " Marriage is a union between a man and woman such that children born to the woman are recognised as the legitimate offspring of both partners ". This is a definition which covers most of the social and legal aspect of any community. In general the impact of caste Hindus is seen best in the marriage practises. The legitimizing aspect and social coverage of marriage, amongst the adivasi is for life. It appears that monogamy is the only form known. There appears to be no betrothal functions among these people.

The marriage ceremony among the adivasi is simple. The marriage is contracted between the two parties viz., that of the boy and the girl through the elders. The elders in the bride's party come first into contact with the bridegroom's party, and propose for the marriage. If all the conditions of the alliance are agreed upon, the marriage is contracted. There is always a dowry system operating among these people, but the value or the amount paid by the bridal party for the bridegroom's party depends on the conomic factors

of the parties contracting the relationship. The amount paid ranges from two rupees to three hundred ruprees. The amount is always paid at the time of marriage. Among the many things copied from the local caste Hindus viz., one is the construction of a small *Pandal* (a shack) at the time of marriage, and another is the utilisation of the services of a higher caste Hindu (a Brahmin priest). The brahmin who attends these marriage functions is who has no professional standing among the local caste Hindus of the village. The amount paid to him may be about a rupee and a half, for each function.

The function is celebrated with a feast amongst the closest relatives. The function is held generally in the hut of the bride's parents. The construction of a small *pandal* is also quite common during recent times. All the near relatives of both sides are invited to take part in the function. The people get seated at convenient spots. All the adult guests are served with betel leaves along with thinly sliced arecanuts. A bit of lime (calcium got out of the mollusc shells) is also distributed. The d stribution of betel leaves with areca in any marriage, forms the chief event, and is of great importance. If the leaves are not distributed properly, the relatives get upset and protest vehemently. Distribution is oriented towards a status oriented order and hence all the care is taken for the proper distribution of these leaves. Sometimes at the marriage time, a small present of rupees five is made to the bride by the birde's people.

The time of the marriage is always fixed by the brahmin, if one performs it, and where none is present, the village elders perform in the same role. There are a few brahmins hailing from Vedaranyam, who conduct adivasi marriages and other religious functions. The brahmin priests from Kodiakkarai do not ritually perform these marriages. During these auspicious times, the bridegroom ties round the neck of the bride what is known as the *Thali*. This thread is often coloured yellow with turmeric. Sometimes, if the bride's party can afford it, they put a *bottu-thali* to the sacred string. The tying of thali around the neck of the bride symbolises the completion of the formalities of the marriage.

Marriages are often preferred between cross-cousins. The marriage of brothers and sisters is prohibited. The preferred marriages are towards the children of maternal uncle (MoBr) or aunt (Fasi). The marriage between a boy to his elder sister's daughter is also common. The prohibited marriages are towards the children of ones own brother's children in the case of a boy, and ones own sister's children in the case of a girl (in both instances are parallel cousins). In the former case the boy becomes a younger father and in the latter case the girl becomes a younger mother. The marriage of a father to daughter, or son to mother, is considered incestuous. While there are always the categories of prescribed and prohibited types of relationships, they work well in larger groups. However it becomes a problem to determine as to who is related to

whom, in a small community composed of about 150 individuals, because, everybody seems to be related to everyone else in one way or another. Hence at some stage or other-theoretically the condition for contracting a preferred marriage alliance cannot be fulfilled. When such situation arises, the marriages are still contracted according to the convenience of relationship, from the preferred point of view. This evidence is further adduced by the fact, that, almost all the adults of the group are all married, no matter how closely the relationship of cousinship affected the issues. The urge for satisfying the needs appears to be quite dominant over the alternate possibilities. Another unique instance where the wisdom of the adivasi traditional pattern was seen, was in the case of *Muniamma*, daughter of Muthan. This girl was found to be mentally retarded and hence no marriage was permitted for her by the people. She was about 25 years old when the field work was being done in 1961–63. During the period when the field work was being done, there were instances wherein some young men had contracted marriages for themselves, instead of following the traditional patterns. For example, young men named Nagappanmagan Kalimuthu, Veeramuthumagan Kathalingam, Chena Mariappan and Aana Rathinam got into touch with girls of their choice and just went on living with them as married couples. Their parents were either dead, or protested their moves, but could not overcome their children's desires or prevent the marriages. These marriages were considered by other adivasi men as *invalid.* This did not affect the individuals at all, because, they felt that in course of time everything would be allright.

Taking in of brides or grooms from Idumbuvanam is also quite common. If no successful marriage for any girl is contracted at Kodiakkadu, the people try at Idumbuvanam. The age at which marriage proposal for any girl is made, is after a year or two of becoming a mature girl, *i.e.*, one or two years after the onset of the first menstruation. In the case of men, the average age at which the men get married range from 20-25, but a good median figure is 23 years. There is always 5-8 years gap between the husband and wife. Residence is patrilocal.

The policy of replacement of a daughter with a daughter-in-law after the marriage of the daughter of the house is prevalent. The need for women in the house for cooking and other domestic help outweigh every other aspect of the situation. Besides, the running and maintenance of a family depends on women in any house.

They are very rarely any conflicts in marriages leading to seperation. However, there are cases on record of a man contracting with another woman or vice-versa, leading to seperation. To this seperation the *Panchayat* must give its approval. The panchayat in its sitting passes the move of seperation,

at the cost of the party which takes the offensive in the matter. This may amount to a hundred rupees or more. Though officially no widow remarriage or divorce remarriage is permitted, if the people affected are young, they generally contract an illegal liason. In case a man, who having lost his wife due to some disease, is permitted to take in another girl as a second wife by the panchayat. Physical stature of the couple contracting marriage does not seem to affect at all because, in one particular case the husband (Kothan) was nearly 6½ feet while his wife (Valliammal) was hardly 4½ feet and they had a baby daughter about 1 year in 1961.

In almost all the cases the marriage brings in a very new situation into the lives of the married people. After marriage, the uttering of the name of the husband by the wife and vice-versa is a taboo. No man gives out the name of his wife. The wife also does not say the name of the husband. When the need arises for calling each other comes up, the woman addresses her man abstractly, whereas the man addresses his wife with a "hey you" attitude, like 'Adi','Vadi' (come), 'Podi' (go), etc. This applies to situations when either of the partner is within the eye sight of the other. In deep jungles, etc., when the need to call out each other arises they "Koo.........." sound to each other. This is a sort of a signal. Each partner being conversant with the tone or the voice of the other picks up and do the needful. This system is effective, as long as the partners are within ear-shot of each other.

General Life Cycle of Adivasis.

The on set of old age leads out to the diminishment of economic value of a person, in the adivasi community. This is some what compensated by the gain shown in the knowledge of tribal matters and customs, but this is not true in all cases. The best informants were mostly old men like Nattamakarar Peraman, Thalayari Subramaniyan and others. There were one or two very good informants belonging to the low and middle age groups like Kanjamallai-Rathinam and Kunju. Old age is looked up as a burden, as in the case of adivasis whose primary occupation is food gathering, where old and infirm become liabilities. One of the ways of offset old age handicaps in a food gathering economy is to learn a new profession like the case of Nattanmakarar. He came into touch with some Kodiakkarai villagers, and learnt the art of fish net weaving. This keeps him fully engaged in all his spare time, aiding financially.

In general, the old people in the adivasi group lead more or less isolated lives. They do not move in one group. Sometimes a few old men participate in the group discussions (Panchayat) and participate in the matters under review. The opinions held by old people are always given much weightage, as the other adivasis feel that old people are more ripe in their Judgments.

Old women, however, do not undertake any part in these kinds of activities. The old women's lives becomes a big problem not only for themselves, but also to the other adivasis. They being rather infirm, and unable to attend to their full needs, depend upon their immediate kin like a grown-up son or daughter to help them. The help rendered ranges from the supply of a meal to the offering of a kind word or even a reprimand. Again old women, particularly when they are single, run into difficulties in the construction and maintenance of shelter for themselves. Since the huts in such cases are built on a co-operative effort, the help received is very meagre. The old women accommodations are limited to a single individual hut and are very small. One person could hardly crawl into the hut through the narrow entrance, with hardly sitting space inside. Old women, however, seem to prefer life in small solitary huts. Old men generally manage to live with their children. The reason why old single women are left to themselves are not clear out, but the reason may be due to lack of large kinsmen. Besides they are liable to the gathering economy in a larger sense viz, they are weak in contrast to men.

Belief concerning death.—Adivasis have belief that death comes after the onset of old age. With the death of a person, that person pervades in the 'air'. The word atmosphere here is the nearest equivalent to the "air", they talk about. The word for death corresponds to what the local villagers term as 'Chavu'. They believe that the dead person's spirit always acts as a guard for them. They also believe that a dead person's spirit sometimes influences a living person, so that the latter behaves as if he loses his mind or acts like an insane person. This is particularly true of spirit of people, who were displeased with the aid or help, and such other co-operation they received in their life, their spirits affecting the people; when the gravity of insanity is considered to be more acute. The native word 'Chavu' governs death and 'Penam' governs the body without life in it. The term 'Pei' is sometimes applied for the dead person's spirit.

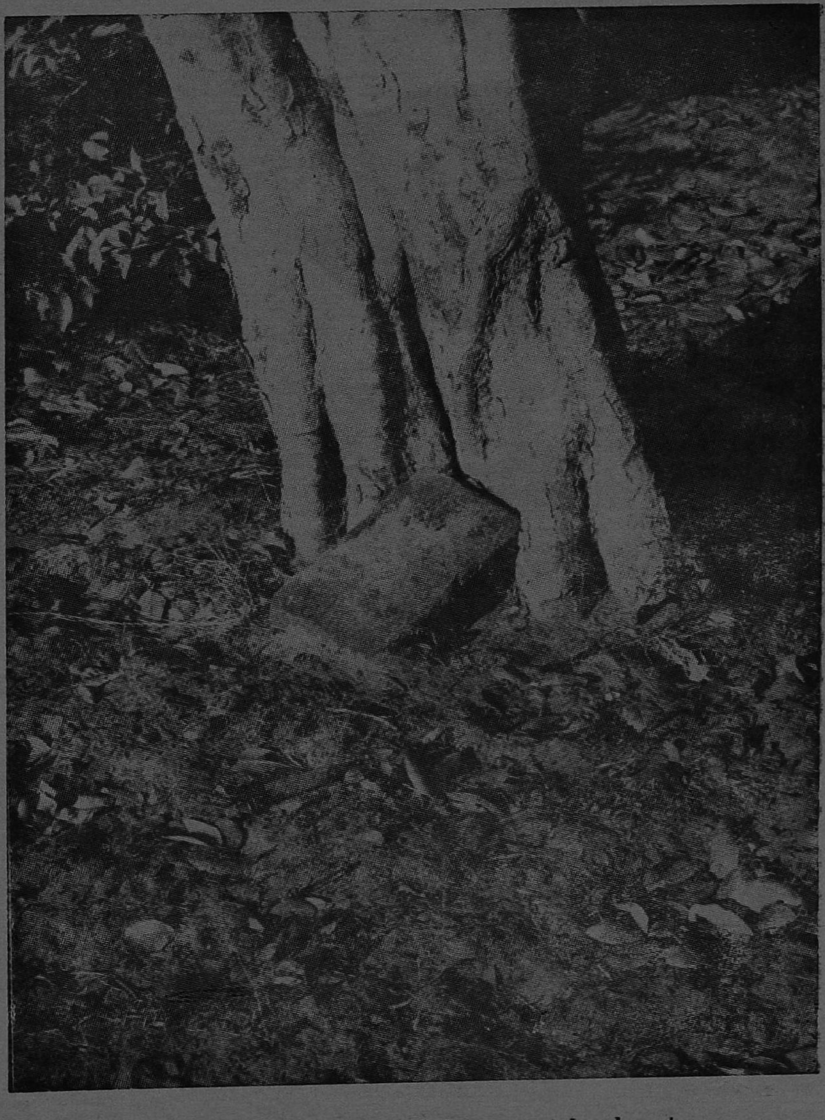
There are beliefs on life after death, like the following. They believe that some people's spirit may pervade round them after death. A person could be in the form of an animal or a bird or a goat, or even as a new human baby. These few beliefs were told to the author by the Nattanmakarar Peraman, who is easily the best informant amongst the adivasis. They have no belief of heaven and hell in the conventional Hindu sense. However, the local influence of the caste Hindus could be seen in some instances as at the death of the husband, the sacred thread (bottu-thali) of the wife is removed and discarded forever.

When a person is sick for a long time and very weak, they consider that death is not very far away. From the appearance and the nature of illness, people come to a fair conclusion; they give all the natural medicines they know

and sometimes give western medicines also, obtained from the local dispensaries. They also offer all possible worship to their local Gods, in the hope that the sick person would be cured, but when the situation reaches the point of no return, the people seem to know it clearly. Such a sick person is usually allowed to die in his hut. Occasionally due to space and other considerations, the dying person is shifted to an open place. All the kinsmen and friends assemble around the dying person, to the extend they are locally available. All people cry for the departing(ed) person. The disposal of the dead body is planned afterwards and it is a complicated process.

The dead body is taken and washed well with water. The body is made to lie in East-West direction. Then the body is drapped in a new cloth if they can afford it. Two long wooden bamboo poles measuring 6′ each at least, are taken and laid parallel to each other on the floor, about 2'—3' apart. Then 7 cross sticks of 2′—3′ length are taken and tied across the parallel sticks. These cross pieces are so arranged as to support the body as well as making the lifting of the frame work easy. It resembles a large sized wooden ladder with seven steps, with free ends of cross sticks at their either ends slightly projecting. Over this framework the corps is made to lie, but not directly on it. The wooden framework is laid on the floor and a woven coconut leaf mat is spread over it. This mat is then anchored at some points so that it does not move freely. Thereafter the dead body is placed over the matted framework. The dead body which has been already drapped with a cloth is tied suitably by means of coconut fibre string over the wooden framework. Some times at the end, intended for placing of the head of the dead person, the cross stick is tied a little higher than those at other places, where it acts as a sort of head rest for the dead person. The head end is drapped with a second cloth, when it is available. The face is kept exposed. The dead body is carried to the field with the aid of friends and kinsmen, of the bereaved person's family. Sometimes the services of the *Pappan* (a colloquial word for the brahmin priest) is procured and his services are utilised. He utters the several *mantrams* at the time of the burial of the dead. At the time of burial of a person, some domestic utensils (mostly pottery) are purchased. Four or five pots are purchased all with suitable lids. The pots are of an average or medium size, capable of holding about a litre of water. The pots may be filled with water and taken to the burial place. Also purchased are two plantain leaves, raw plantains two in number, beans in a small quantity and long red fresh brick of a rectangular shape. The brick purchased or got is of the usual domestic house building type. The brick is marked with seven cross lines, parallel to the breadth side, and the marks are made with white lime (calcimum used for white-washing of houses, or eaten with betel leaves, and this lime is obtained from boiling molluskan shells). The red brick with the white cross strokes, forms a very strange contrast of two bright colours. Rice is also purchased but is limited to ¼ a measure and filled into one of the pots.

PLATE No. 6



An Adivasi God "Veerah'. A brick placed at the foot of the tree symbolises the Deity.

The dead body is carried out into a place on the outskirts of their habitations and buried into a grave, which has already been dug up for the purpose. The brahmin utters all the mantrams. When once the pit is filled in, the chief mourners and others move over to small tank or lake (or any other source of water), and take their ceremonial baths. At that time they discard all the pottery, rice and other vegetables into the water. The brick with seven white cross strokes on it is also thrown into the water. Occasionally they also break away the pots before they drop them inside. The dropping in of the brick into water symbolises the completion of the preliminary functions associated with the burial. The dropping of the brick according to these people signifies the dropping of dead person into a media, where food, water and other requirements are readily available.

The laying to rest of the dead body is done usually with a piece of cloth, purchased newly from the local market. In the case of people who are extremely poor, and do not have much money to celebrate a funeral, they do not buy new clothing. Old clothing in good condition can be supplemented. The dead body is buried with all the clothing draped on it.

Burying is the custom prevalent in the adivasi culture from time immemorial. Due to the associations with the caste Hindus, the adivasis have come to copy the Brahmins, who cremate their dead. The adivasis have come to perform cremation in two instances, at the time of field work. The firewood being freely available in the Kodiakkarai forests, this way of reposal is one of the easiest to do. This however, has not caught on. The old traditions are still maintained. The two cases of cremation are essentially influences of local people of higher castes, but it has not been a success really.

The brahmin priests who work during death rites, get at the end of the functions 2-3 rupees, and occasionally when the bereaved party could afford, a piece of clothing is also given. He may also get a small quantity of rice. Very poor people conduct the death rites without a brahmin to assist. The function is then conducted by the elders. However, on the whole the adivasi execute the plans of reposal of their dead in a more or less similar manner. The processes are the same for all the dead persons irrespective of the exact cause of death. In the case of the death of a woman, a new saree is used for draping the body. In the case of children, the process is done in the same way as in the case of the adults, but without the elaborateness about it. The goods and services either at the time of inhumation or internment, are the same for both sexes and for adults as well as for children. Mourning is observed for a period of 30 days or a month, by the immediate kin of the dead individual. During this period, they observe a taboo against entry into the adivasi temple and temple areas.

CHAPTER IV.

Religion of Adivasis.

The religion of the Adivasis appears to have been least influenced by the adjacent village people, in the larger sense. Most of the "Gods"* are symbolised by means of a small stone/s placed at the foot of a tree/s (Plate No. 6). Very near to the habitations is found a grove of trees, arranged naturally. There are two main temple complexes in the adivasi group. These temples are situated about 2 furlongs from the main habitations. The place is called *Palatope* by the adivasis. Each visitor to this temple is asked to remove their shoes at least within 50 feet away from the temple. These people believe that their temples must be situated in the forest as they live in the forests. They always want their Gods and Goddesses to be with them. According to Nattanmakarar (Peraman), the place was selected for the construction of a temple through a 'Shaman', (persons who have got 'Avesham' or get possessed by God). These temples were said to be established during the period of Peraman's forefather's time, some 200 years ago. The main priests of these temples are two different individuals. One is the village headman—the *Nattanmakarar,* and the other is *Kunju.* The temple of Nattanmakarar is known as *Veeran koil* and that of Kunju, *Kali Koil.*

Priesthood in Adivasi temples is inherited. According to Peraman his eldest son would take up the head priestmanship after his death. If there is only son, he inherits it. At any important festival if the main priest perchance is not available, the immediate successor officiates. Such temporary priesthood given to any one person does not give him permanent right to the job. The immediate members of the priest's family enjoy certain amount of rights and privileges, particularly during their day-to-day life. There are no female priests, but there are female Shamans. The Adivasis have great belief in the existence of "Gods" and Goddesses, whom they consider as supernatural forces, whose origin is not known to them. Their present conceptions of them have been based on the ideas furnished to them by their forefathers. The word-by-mouth messages have been retained to the best of their abilities.

There is a firm belief amongst the people that certain diseases are caused by incurring the displeasure of certain God/s or Goddess/es and that their control essentially depends on the affected individuals propitiating that particular God. In such matters the method adopted is follows. The affected head of the family performs "*puja*" by offering cooked rice, coconuts, betels and some incense materials like camphor. These offerings are spread before the supernatural power whom they are propitiating on a woven coconut of

a large size. The insense is placed in a *Thuvakkal* (Pounding Stone) and is lighted. The coconut is broken at this time. Then the affected family head and all the male members of the family bow down to the supernatural power. In the case of worship at Kali temple, it has become the practise to spread Vibhuti (sacred ash) on the forehead of the people worshipping.

Twice a year, the adivasis have a grand religious function. They may pool their resources together and spend about 150–200 rupees. They may also collect some money from the local Mirasdars. During any other special occasion they perform puja. Their grand puja however coincides with those of the local people of Kodiakkarai, which are the *Deepavali* and the *Pongal*. From the information obtained from the village caste Hindus, the adivasis celebrate their grand puja on the same days.

According to one of the informants, Kanjamalai Rathinam, the spreading of ash on the forehead indicated the formal completion of the religious rites by affected family or person. The supernatural powers of the adivasis, enter or get possessed by certain individuals, who utter some oracles, orders under such influences. The adivasis call this particular action as "Avesham". These people become *Shamans* during the *avesham* period. In these cases a small monetary fine (a rupee or two) would be imposed on the offender (propitiations being done for a specific instance) who in turn remits the same to the pujari. Very rarely is the fine remitted at the time of puja. The amounts later disbursed amongst the people who maintain the temples. Tuesdays and Fridays are auspicious and hence they are good days for undertaking any religious function.

One feature of significance is that these people do observe some sort of restrictions on certain of these occasions. For several days after events like child birth (16 days), menstruation period (4 to 7 days) death in a family (1 month or 30 days and sometimes 2 months also), the affected family people are prohibited from entering the temple. The menstructing women are not permited to cook in their houses, and at these times, cooking is done by men folk, if there are no other women in the house. The women are also not allowed to touch the pottery, and cooking utensils during this period. These people observe that if women do the cooking during this period, evil would befall them. In the house of Peraman (the village headman), if woman are having their periods, he is not even allowed to touch his *Udukkai*, a small drum made of wood, let alone beat it. There is some firm belief that if he ever plays the drum during this period, all the Gods and Goddesses would get angry and great danger would be fall them. Further more, the priest is not allowed to enter the temple during this time

The Gods and Goddesses of the Adivasis .—*Kali* is a Goddess, but ***Minedayan Thoondikaran, Kathavarayan, Kombukaran, Soni, Kazhuvadayan, Veeran*** and ***Sevarayan*** are all Gods. *Kamatchi Amman* who is also known as *Mariamman* sometimes, and *Kampayamman* are Goddesses. At the time of worship it has been found that for the past few decades, the following Gods or Goddesses "Possess" the following persons, who then become Shamanistic. It means that they possess some persons, who then get into a trance and utter oracles, and indicate the remedial measures to be taken. Adivasis call this as '*Avesham*'. The God *Minedayan, Thoondikaran, Kombukaran* and Goddess *Kali* mediate through the Nattanmakarar (who is known as Peraman). *Soni* and *Kazhuvadayan* act through Pena Murugayyan. *Soni* and *Kazhuvadayan* also act through Kunju. *Muniyan* acts through Vena Kalimuthu and Veyana Murugayyan. Finally *Mariamman* and *Kathavaraya Chami* act through Suna Kathan. *Mariamman* a female supernatural power mediates through a man, Veerappan. Another Goddess Kampayamman 'falls' on Karuppayee, an adivasi lady. This reveals that the Gods and Goddesses act through both men and women irrespective of the sex. A late addition to the Gods of Adivasis is *Sevarayan*, a male supernatural power. He is considered by the adivasis not as a God of their own, and this particular power does not act through anybody. From this list it is apparent that not all the Gods and Goddesses mediate in the same fashion.

Adivasis believe that worship of *Kali* always brings some wealth and freedom from sickness. There is also another Goddess known as *Kannamma Pongal*, and this Goddess is considered to be a virgin. There is a tree for this Goddess, but with no stone at its base. In the case of God *Kazhuvadayan*, the stone is missing at the base. The adivasis feel that no stone can be taken and put at the base of the tree earmarked for any God or Goddess. This must be done under a *Shamanistic* spell. When the next worship takes place, the shaman picks up a stone while being possessed, and from that time onwards the stone attains a special status. Everybody worships the stone from then onwards. Since *Kannamma Pongal* does not get possessed by anyone in the adivasis, no stone placement has occurred. There is a little oven constructed near the Veeran temple which the adivasis utilise for cooking purposes at religious functions.

There is an evil spirit located in the Adivasi temple known as *Katari miniyan*. People are afraid of this spirit. This is not a God but a spirit and it always brings evil or wrath. The adivasis basically categories evil and good as criteria in sorting out Gods and Goddesses on one hand, and the evil spirits on the other.

The Gods and Goddesses of *Kali* temple and *Veeran* temple are nearly the same. The division into two separate groups came to exsist some 25 or 30 years ago. This can be adduced from the fact given by Kunju that he was

still a young boy when this split came about. At the moment Kunju is nearly 40 years old. The split is said to have come about, due to some ideological differences in the type of worship adopted by the two groups. People following *Veeran* temple have given monetary assistance in the worship at *Kali* temple, while the opposite party as also done the same. Each groups partakes at the others' functions. The major festivals are however done collectively, but worship takes place at both the temples simultaneously. One point of difference which has been observed is the following:

People following the Kali temple (Kunju's group) worship *Kamatchi-amman* in their huts. They ear mark a corner of the hut for this Goddess. In this corner they apply a little of turmeric paste, and then put a vermilion mark. At this corner is sometimes placed a piece of cloth, of 5 meters long, which not used by anyone. In this corner the Goddess is supposed to inhabit. The corner is held sacred. The symbolic representation of the God is seen from the cloth, turmeric and vermilion. Worship of this Goddess is done in the hut itself. Such a worship of Goddess Kamatchi-Amman inside the huts is not seen amongst the people following Veeran temple (Nattanmakarar's group). The worship of *Kamatchiamman* is not done at Veeran households because they have a Kamatchiamman in their temple. Kunju's party worships Kamatchiamman during Deepavali and Pongal with special emphasis. The puja is then performed first in the hut and later in the temple, and then the general worship follows. The temple of Nattanmakarar is gradually relocating a little closer towards the habitations. These people have joined together and built a small hut, in which they are planning to install their Gods.

Of late it has also become the practice of adivasis to worship the Gods and Goddessess of the adjacent Hindu Villages. For example, they go to vedaranyam temple and worship *Vedanayaki*. They workship *Durga* and *Murugar* at *Azhagar koil* at Kodiyakkadu. All enquries reveal that these people have taken a liking to what one might call as "Adopted" Gods and Goddesses, because on coming to hear of the boons and favours that these divine powers have granted to the village folk (of kodiyakkarai), they have been impressed and have adapted them. During severe epidemics and other catastrophies, these people pray to these Gods and Goddesses by going to their concerned temples. They may offer a coconut on fruit, or similar articles, as offered by caste Hindus. They may also give a little 'dakshina' (monetary offering). During the year 1956, when there was a cyclone accompanied by severe floods at Kodiyakkarai, all the adivasi hamlets got damaged and the people were rendered homeless. At this time these people were harboured in the temple at Kodiyakkarai against the elements.

Some religious functions of these people are very interesting. The moment someone wants to perform a religious function, a sort of reverence, envelop-

them. As the function progresses, acts of religious nature appear to be done more reverentially than otherwise. Again, as the function is in progress, a man or a woman through whom " God " acts, invariably becomes agitated and starts moving in an ecstasy, dancing vilently. He moves about freely in the religious area. Then all of a sudden the person concerned starts talking out loudly, and inchoherently. The intonation and pronunciation of words never appear to conform to the usual phonetics. Since the people performing the function are rapt with attention to such utterances, they have really no difficulty in understanding them. The religiously invoked persons are called the *Shamans* in Anthropological Literature. Spreading of sacred ash on the forehead of the oracle uttering individual is also quite common. No propitiatory function is complete without these Shamans through whom God or Goddesses acts. People who had committed sins, petty crimes or theft, are sometimes brought before " Gods " when the accused is asked to speak the truth. It is said that the victim sheds tears, shivers and utters the truth, in the presence of the Gods. The Shaman as we may call him, also imposes a fine. This itself is the primary punishment. Later the tribal panchayat council may take further decisions on the exact punishment to be inflicted, which is discussed in a later section.

During the field trip there was a chance of observing a religious function, which is significant. A few days prior to the coming of a religious function, an amount of Rs. 5 was given to the headman, with a request to propitiate certain God. This particular " God " was reputed to fall on one of the Adivasis, who after getting so possessed, uttered oracles. The intention was to make Shamanistic behavioural observations. Everything was expected to go through alright by the headman. Contrary to the expectation, the headman himself returned with the money, a day prior to the actual ceremony, with the small information that the "God" who was to be propitiated had got entranced and commanded that the amount be returned back. He also gave this information that their "God" had instructed them that no one can "buy" their "God" with *money*. It is clear that these Adivasis do not attach much importance to the materialistic aspects of life, in relation to the spiritual and religious aspects.

The Gods of the Adivasi temples are rather simple. As pointed elsewhere briefly, they are mostly represented by trees and small stones. Generally, each God or Goddess is identified by a certain tree, and the tree is fairly big. An average tree measures about 25 feet in height, and the base of the trunk may be anywhere between 8—10' in diameter to a foot and a half. At the base of the main trunk or stem of all the sacredly held trees, are placed a small brick stone or two. These stones symbolise the supernatural power. These are the objects that are worshipped. During the course of any religious function, the offering of rice, coconuts and other such things, is directed towards the stone located at the base of a particular tree, with all the reverance. This type of

worship is what has been going on from time immemorial. The length of an average religious function goes on for an hour at least, and sometimes it may last for 4—5 hours. The length of the function mostly depends on the economic ability of the individual performing it. During the very long and important functions, the village headman viz., Peraman, strikes an *Udukkai*. *Udukkai* is a small percussion instrument made up of two bottomless flowerpot like structures which are placed with the bottom ends together, so much so that it looks like an hour glass in the profile. A striking leather is attached to both the ends, and the instrument measures about 20 cms in length. and about 12 cms. in diameter at the percussion ends. It is comparatively less in diameter in the middle section, somewhere about 8 cms. in the middle. The leather striking surfaces are attached by means of gum and occasionally with fibre or cotton loops and hoops to give tension to percussion surface.

Traditionally these people observe some austerities like fasting. One such is known as *Amavasai Vratham*. During the new moon day of every month, these people observe certain fasting, abstain from all food for the whole day. They take water when they feel thirsty. The people who are fit and healthy, go into the forests for food materials but those who are weak and sick, avoid it. The Amavasai Vratham is observed by men only. In the case of women, they observe a fasting known as *Chitraparvam*. Some children may also join in this.

Chitraparvam and *Vishakavellam* are two occasions that govern the life of Kodiakkarai caste Hindus. This is also true of the caste Hindus living in Vedaranyam, in general extending from Point Calimere (Kodiakkarai to Adiramapattinam). This whole coastal area gets filled periodically with two high tides, which occur at about the full moon days of *May* and *June* respectively. The results of this flooding in of the sea water, had given rise to the Vedaranyam spontaneous salt. In earlier days the water got locked into natural depressions and pools lying on the contour of the earth. But now-a-days, artificial construction of bunds are all done to retain the flooded salt water from the sea. The coming of *Chitraparvam* coincides somewhere around the month of *May* as per the English calendar. The fasting is done on the new moon days during the first month of Tamil calendar, which is called *Chitra*. These people now know the calendar of Tamils with the help of the local caste Hindus. *Vishakavellam* however is not observed with any type of fastings.

A note on Religion, Village Gods, Tanjore district.—Village Gods in and around the rural folk of Tanjore district, offer some interesting side lights. The

Village Gods that are found in the rural areas of South India and particularly in Tanjore district are :—

1. *Aiyanar.*
2. *Mariamman.*
3. *Ulakattal.*
4. *Pidari.*
5. *Karuppan.*
6. *Madurai Veeran.*
7. *Pechi.*
8. *Minnedayan.*
9. *Katteri.*
10. *Kathavarayan.*

Aiyanar is a demi-God and from mythological stories, he is known to be the son born of Lord Shiva and Mohini, during the churning of the ocean for ambrosia. Mohini is the female form of Lord Vishnu. Mohini came in-between the Rakshas (Demons) and Devatas (Gods) to divide the ambrosia. Mythology goes to say that, seeing the beauty of Mohini, Shiva seduced her with the result Aiyanar was born. *Aiyanar* is generally depicted as riding an elephant, and is worshipped quite commonly. After this, *Madurai Veeran* is worshipped, followed by *Pechi, Karuppan* and *Kathavarayan.* All the other village deities occur almost equally otherwise. The presiding character of the deities varies from area to area. However the general belief is that they do more good than evil. These deities must be propitiated quite frequently with feasts and other forms of worship like offering of fowl, goats and other items. Some of the shrines of Village Gods are located in groves outside the villages. These groves are held very sacred. No twig or branch in these groves must be touched or removed. This is supposed to bring wrath for the village. Further, large clay horses, elephants and similar figures are placed in these groves, to assist the deities in the nightly peregrinations of the deities. *Mariamman* is worshipped as the deity for prevention of small pox and cholera. *Madurai Veeran* is the deification of a historical character, whose exploits have become legendary.

The above deities generally have a temple. But amongst the very poor people, the abode is nothing more than a mere clearing which may be enclosed or unenclosed. There will be a collection of trees in this area or even a single tree. The place of image is taken up occasionally by an upright spear. Sometimes instead of a spear mere bricks are placed at the foot of trees and worshipped. In these instances the bricks are substituted in the place of spear. Once in a while even the brick is not present, and the whole tree is worshipped. Several of these small deities could be successfully propitiated with fowl or goat sacrifice.

Periodically large scale worhsip of the deities are done. For example on the 1st day of *Adi* (a Tamil Month falling around July–August) a special festival is prepared.

In the understanding of the Religion of Adivasis, almost all the typical features of Tanjore Village Gods are noticeable. However the interest in the matter rests in the fact, that the Adivasis are in a food gathering stage of economy, and their location on the fringe of a caste-Hindu village has accelerated the process of their rapid Sanskritization-(Srinivas :). Also the effects of modern technology has accelerated their taking to modern fish nets, traps and other items. We are now confronted with the fact, that the effective change of culture, is a conflict between *tradition* and *induced cultural change.* Not only is this confrontation seen in their Forest Produce Exploitation, but also in their religion where they are now building a permanent temple to " their deities ". Effective studies during next few years could throw insight into the final effect of these changes.

CHAPTER V.

POLITICAL ORGANISATION.

Political organisation as expressed here governs all aspects of law and order situation in the groups as well as all the institutions which maintain the integrity of the group in relationship to other groups. It includes, however, mainly the rights of every member of the adivasi group how it is maintained and pre-guarded.

Every adivasi living at Kodiakkarai becomes the member of the group. Occasionally some people migrate from Idumbavanam to Kodiakkarai, when they are also taken in as the members of the group. For all the members there is only one headman. He is also known as the *Nattanmakarar* (Plate No. 8). His real name is *Peraman.* His power as the leader or guide of the adivasi exists over the Kodiakkarai group, although they claim that Idumbavanam group is under him. He is the chief for almost all the adivasi men and women.

System or regu ltio n or control.—The system of political regulation of the adivasis is interesting. The headman is the chieftain. He is responsible for the control of the people, at times, he may be assisted by a council of persons, both elders and younger people. At the head of this council sits one man who is known as the *Thalayari* but the Nattanmakarar is the leader. For any matter, his opinion is the crucial one. The way how a decision will result depends on the other member of the council, who depend upon the way the Nattanmakarar presents the case. This advisory council is called by the adivasis as the *Panchayat* (Plate No. 7). However, this system has been in vogue for a very long time. Now amongst the adivasis, is a new generation composed of the younger people who opposed this system. Headed by two persons, viz. Kunju and Kavyanali Rathinam, these people have found that the affairs of the council have been ' rigged ' and hence they wanted this council (Panchayat) to be removed. During field work, these people have told their elders, that they should break away from this council system. This system is a very old one and people are attached to it very much, but seeing the rigidity of the cases, the reformists want it to be removed. The chances of its removal from the adivasi set up seem to be very remote.

The only leadership, is of a permanent nature and it is inherited by people belonging to the same family. It is usually the eldest son. The order of inheritance is Patrilineal. This chieftain's role is also inclusive of the chief priest's office. The election of a successor goes on without a quarrel or argument. The eldest son automatically inherits it. The headman also has some grea religious powers. Several of the Gods and Goddesses from *Peran Koil* can mediate through him or through the members of his family. This invests them

with a special kind of reverence. The chief also has special powers delegated to him hereditarily, like the right to conduct death ceremonies, marriages, and other functions. The chief is not entitled to any specific gifts, but as the head priest, of the large adivasi temple, he takes away the major share of money spent by others at religious functions and in the propitiation of Gods and Goddesses. This itself is a great source of financial benefit for him. The services of the chief are not only demanded upon, in the day to day activities, but also on other religious occasions. The chief alone in the whole village knows the playing of ' Udukkai ', consequently he is also considered as a great religious promulgator and channeliser. The chief gets the prerogative to receive visitors and guide them through the temple. If necessary he also gives them hospitality too. He is also the spokesman for the group. The present chief is, at the moment the only man with a bit of reading abilities, and as such is a great asset. He is also a bit more materially possessed than that of the average adivasi (*See* material culture), because he seeks out a living from several alternative sources.

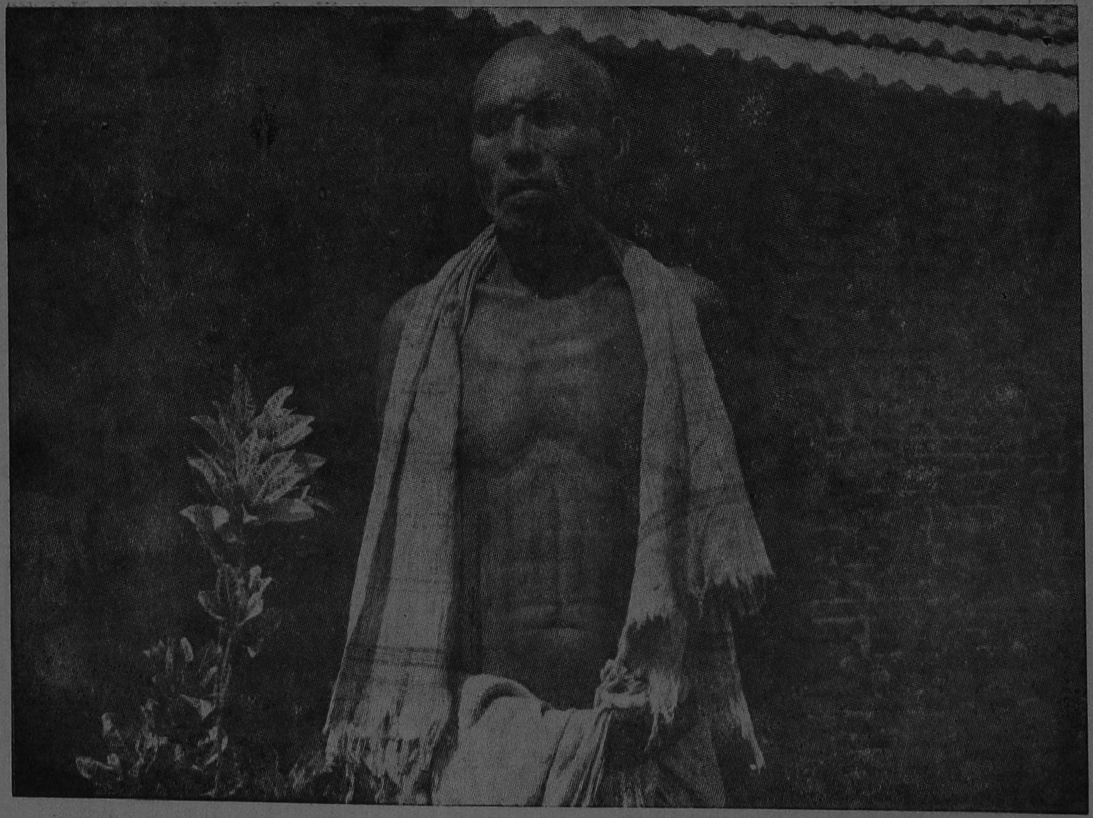
Councils and council officials.—The headman in the discharge of his duties, is assisted considerably by the council officials. The council officials are now known as ' Panchayat members '. Traditionally the Panchayat is supposed to contain five members, but in practise amongst the adivasis, the members are more than five. Generally all the men sit in the Council. The presiding authority is not the chief, but one of the older men. The *Thalayari* is also a partime employee of the Government. For the maintenance of law and order the Government employs in almost all village or small group, a *Thalayari.* He is responsible for the maintenance of law and order from the Tamilnadu Government point of view. He is paid a small amount every month. Enquiries revealed that, the Thalayari is paid about Rs. 50 a month, which is a colossal amount. Amongst all adivasis, the Thalayari is the richest man. He had accumulated quite some money, built a *pucca* house, maintains a poultry and shop, and has some real good jewellery. In view of his age (he appears to be older than the headman) and also of his status (official standing with the Government), he presides over the Council. However he has no political powers on the adivasis. As mentioned in the beginning, the real headman is the *Nattanmakarar.* Amongst the other Council members, age and seniority have really no significant roles at all. All th members sit in the Council equally

Law and justice.—As observed everywhere else the members belonging to adivasi group are governed by a certain observances followed traditionally, and follow certain religious codes. They maintain a fairly high standard in all these acts. For the successful maintenance of all these regulatory practises, the Council helps with the aid of the headman. The maintenance of law and

PLATE NO. 7

An Adivasi Panchayat Session in Progress.

PLATE No. 8



" Nattanmakarar ", The Best Adivasi Informant.

order is also under the control of the Council, The maintenance of communal life is governed by the Council. Any party quarrels and arguments are put forth before the council,

The Council head sits at the head, a slightly raised area; and all the other members sit before him. The conversation is set rolling by the headman, *peraman*. The accused and the defendant are both present at the time when the dispute is reviewed. Each puts forth his/her case, and the council members discuss over it. The discussion is participated by all the members of the group. The discussion may then end up with voice voting, and then the decision is taken. The punishment is invariably suggested by the council-head, Thalayari. He might perhaps suggest a simple fine of Rs. 2 or 3 even more. This matter is then discussed again. Some people would then say *"who is the accused who has been fined now with XXXX rupees ?" He is well known to be a poor man, He cannot afford to pay so much. Even if he starts paying the amount by instal. ments, it would take him a long time to clear the XXXX rupees"*. Then all the people re-think the issues once over. The case is then decided on its merits thereafter. The fine would be reduced substantially. If the offence is simple, the accused may be just warned and asked not to repeat thc offence again. It is however the custom, that, the initial fine imposed is always a very heavy fine, and then it is reduced later to varying amounts in each case. The objection raised by some reformist adivasis on the evils of the council system is pertinent here. The fines and their reduction in individual cases are always rigged. That means, such of those people who are close to the headman get a more beneficial treatment than others. There are instances when some people have been fined quite heavily, while others for equal offences have not been done so. This leads to the further deterioration of the already poor economic conditions of some people. The reformist adivasis, hence, want the council system to be removed. Since the council system is a traditional one, almost all the adivasis are bound by it.

The cases that come under the review of the council are cases of fight between individuals, between husband and wife, theft of forest produce, marriage issues, divorce cases, adultery, infidelity and others. These cases are reviewed and punishment inflicted based on the individual merits. Even though the adivasis practice monogamy (marriages are for life), cases of husband-wife quarrels leading to separation come up once in a way. These quarrels always result in secondary offences like infidelity. These case are examined with great care and separation is allowed thereafter. Some times these people may be permitted to remarry also. The illegal attachment of some persons (mostly belongihg to the reformist group) with girls, and living as married persons, treferred to elsewhere, has been reviewed by the Council, which has not accorded any sanction. However, the reformist people are still living together, feeling hat in course of time all would be settled.

The fines collected at all these instances are remitted to the Thalayari and the Nattanmakarar who divide it between them. They both enjoy this privilege. In the Panchayat of the next generation, it would be the legal heir of the above persons who would enjoy these rights. It pays to be either a headman or the council head, amongst the Adivasis. The members of the council do not get anything for payment for their services. They just form the members, and with their strength and leanings, decide the cases put before them.

The part played by Thalayari from the Government point of view is entirely diffe·ent. He is the legal representative of the Government, amongst the Adivasis. It is well known that the Adivasis seek out livelihood in the forest. In their rounds for gathering food, they also secure firewood fo· fire making and money for earning purposes. So they make an effort to get them both done at the same time, while they are in the forests. The deforestation policy of the Government prevents any person from breaking firewood in the forests. Hence anyone who gets firewood from the forests, commits an offence. The Forest department always watch the situation with the aid of Forest Rangers, Forest Guards and other staff. The movements of the Adivasis is closely watched by all these Forest Department Staff. Since Adivasis' traditional occupation needs to go into the forest and get the produce, they are sometimes caught red-handed. Occasionally some manage to " get away ", but being known to other members of their own groups, by their names they are betrayed and then summoned to the court. The serving of the summons, the handing over of the culprit to the proper authorities, are vested in the Thalayari. Since this man is also the council head, he wields a double influence. The Government makes demands of him and to arrest the offenders. He also has to be the Government's witness when needed. The culprits are taken to the Magistrate's court at Vedaranyam, and the case is reviewed. The judgment is then given, which is usually a fine, in default of which the culprit is sent for imprisonment. The Adivasis being poor and unable to pay the fine, go to the jail. They stay there for the termed period, and then come back. Almost all the adults, excepting a very few, have been to the jail at Vedaranyam at one time or the other. Being a small group, the order maintained amongst themselves as regards to behaviour towards each other is very high. Knowing the results that would turn out if they seek the wrath of the council or headman, the majority of the people go quietly about, sacrificing some of their basic rights. They prefer a day of starvation instead.

For the reformists it took a very long time (at the end of author's third field trip—1½ years since the beginning of this project), to pick up courage and to ventilate their grievances of the evils of Council System, and the obviously conflicting interests of the Thalayari. There are no instances of break of taboo and similar restriction amongst the Adivasis. People are very much afraid

that breakage of any restriction on taboos would bring them the displeasure of their Gods and Goddesses. So, they observe great precautions in all these matters. Hence no such case comes under the review of the council. For purposes of the maintenance of law and order, men, women, and grown up children are all equally accountable.

Justice.—The Council is responsible for setting right of any dispute. Justice is restored between two parties, or against anybody, by fining money or giving extra work, like getting forest produce to the offended person or persons. This meets the usual ends of justice. The decisions of the Council on judicial matters is honoured without any objections, but remittance of fines are usually delayed.

The idea of ownership is very closely linked with property. The term "Ownership" is perhaps defined as the sum total of the rights, one or several people or even groups have, over a thing/s or right/s. From this point of view, Adivasis do not really possess much. They consider all they earn as their property and keep it for themselves. The ownership of property for Adivasis fall into three categories. There are some properties which are owned individually like the material goods. There are articles owned collectively by a family like the hut and utensils. There are objects which are owned collectively. These objects could be either materialistic, or non-materialistic. A good example for this is the temple area and the newly constructed temple premises. In the case of the former every member of the group has an equal right to go to the temple, assuming among other conditions not preventing such entry, and in the case of the latter the group jointly owns the new temple premises, having contributed their share to it.

Types of property.— Houses, land on which the houses are built, household articles and tools belong to the family. All members have a right over all the articles. Personal effects like wearing apparel, ornaments like bangles, ear-rings, etc., are individual property. The small Kamatchi Amman lodged in the huts, belongs to the family in which the Amman is located. Some objects like fishing nets, traps, sickles and other tools belong to the family, and it is the men folk who handle them mostly. Poultry and livestock if owned, belong to the family. Ownership of cattle, fowl and other small objects change when one person sells it to another and in return gets something else in kind or in cash. Some saleable commodities like fertiliser (forest humus material) belongs to the whole family that has collected it, and its benefits are enjoyed by all the members of the family.

The land now occupied by the Adivasis belongs to the Government. This land has been allotted to them. The basis of allotment has an acre per head of a family. Though allotted, the ownership (patta) has not been issued to them as yet. There is much dissatisfaction amongst the Adivasis over this issue.

Inheritance .— Inheritance comprises of only the rights over the land and property, while strictly speaking, inheritance comprises only the rules governing the transmission of property from a dead person to his heirs and transfers of property during life. Succession to social rights and political offices is also common. Amongst the Adivasis, the children get an equal chance to inherit the property of the parents, and the daughters in any family, go out from their parent's house after their marriage. Hence the son gets the equal chance of inheriting any property. However, if the mother remains alive, she gets all the property, left behind by the husband, like the hut and utensils. She may live separately with an unmarried daughter. In case of social and political rights, the elder son alone inherits. Women have a subordinate status in life, though an equal share of ownership is enjoyed by them in all material objects. In case of any disputed inheritance, it is referred to the council, whose decision is binding on the disputing parties.

APPENDIX A.

Some kinship terms.—The terms under which the individual of a family call each other are interesting. In any family or group the general terms of addressing the elders and youngsters and others etc., are given below.—

Father.—Appa.

Father's brother.—Peria Appa and Chinna Appa. The former applies to the elder brother of the father, and the latter to the younger brother of the father. This term is also applied to the cousins of Father's brothers, both on the mother as well as the father's side.

Father's brother's wife.—Periatha, Chinnathi, Chinnamma, Chinnayee, Periamma and Periayee. Where the word Peria precedes, it denotes the older and where the word Chinna precedes, then it refers to the younger of the individuals, to whom the reference is made. In all these cases, the reference is to the age of the person to whose relative position the reference is made, and not social or economic status.

Father's sisters.—Attey, Mami, Periattey and Chinnattey. Here the former two terms are generally applied. The latter refer to older and younger individuals, relative to the central character from whom the orientation or reference is made.

Mother.—Aya, Akka, Amma. All these three terms are used, but the term most frequently used by children is Amma.

Mother's brother.—Amman, Mama. This person is the maternal uncle. This term is also applied to the cousins of the maternal uncle, through the maternal's uncle's mother or father.

Mother's sisters.—Chinnatha, Periatha are applied. The former refers to the younger sister of the mother, and the later to the elder sister of the mother. This term is also applied to the cousins of the mother's sisters, both on father as well as the mother's side,

Wife.—Generally called as Adi, Vadi, Podi, etc. by the husband. The general features are that the name of the wife is never called out by the husband. At the same time the utterance of the husband's name is a taboo for the wife. When the name of the husband is asked of a married woman, the answer invariably comes not from the wife, but from her friends or companions. If the situation so arises, wherein the wife wants to communicate to her husband; she just gives out a long sound Koooooo.................., and the husband, who is conversant with the wife's voice responds. Such situations are common, and occur frequently in the forests, when they go out for food gathering.

APPENDIX B.

While the emphasis of study amongst the Adivasis was primarily Ecological and Cultural in nature, the opportunity was used in collecting the blood samples for ABO System analysis. The sera for determining the blood groups were obtained from the King Institute in Guindy. The technique for blood group analysis followed is the standard methods suggested by Race and Sanger. The size of the sample drawn from among the adivasis is 68 individuals, which includes both sexes and all age groups. The randomness of the sample is not effected, as the population is a small one, the avoidance of genealogical relatives is not always possible, a point made by several investigators.

The gene frequencies* obtained are as follows. The formula used is Bernstein's.

Blood group.	*Observed Values.*	*Observed Percentages.*	*Expected Percentages.*	*Gene Frequencies.*
O	13	19·12	19·71	r=0·4439
A	42	61·76	62·99	p=0·4654
B	6	8·83	8·99	q=0·0918
AB	7	10,29	8·54	

* The statistical help by Shri P. V. S. Kumar is gratefully acknowledged.

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